THE COLOUR REVOLUTIONS IN THE FORMER SOVIET REPUBLICS

Successes and failures

Edited by Donnacha Ó Beacháin and Abel Polese

ROUTLEDGE

The Colour Revolutions in the Former Soviet Republics

During the first decade of the twenty-first century, a remarkable phenomenon swept through the former Soviet Union changing the political, social and cultural landscape. Popularly known as the 'Colour Revolutions', these non-violent protests overthrew autocratic regimes in three post-Soviet republics: the Georgian Rose Revolution (2003), the Ukrainian Orange Revolution (2004) and the Kyrgyzstani Tulip Revolution (2005). This book examines the significance of these regime-change processes for the post-Soviet world in particular and for global politics in the twenty- first century.

Engaging comprehensively with the former Soviet republics, the contributors to this book ask why there wasn't a revolution in a post-Soviet republic such as Russia, despite apparently favourable conditions. They also explore the circumstances that ensured some post-Soviet countries underwent a successful colour revolution whilst others did not. Identifying the conditions for successful colour revolutions, this book asks whether there is a revolutionary blueprint that may be exported to other areas around the world that are under autocratic rule. Carefully considering the ideologies of the post-Soviet ruling regimes, this book demonstrates the manner by which political elites integrated nationalism, authoritarianism and populism into public debates. It analyzes the diverse anti-regime movements, discussing the factors that led to the rise of such factions and outlining how these opposition groups were constituted and operated. In addition, it assesses the impact of external forces including the influence of the USA, the EU and Russia. By examining the colour revolution phenomenon in its entirety, this book marks a significant contribution to both our micro and macro understanding of this tide of transformation.

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Foreword

It was, we were told, the 'end of history' when the USSR collapsed in 1991 and its various republics became independent states. Lenin, so far, has stayed in the mausoleum on Red Square. But across the entire post-Soviet region ruling parties were overthrown, official ideologies were repudiated, and red flags gave way to tricolours. In Warsaw, the party headquarters became the stock exchange; in Moscow, the Marx and Engels Museum became the Noblemen's Club; in Tashkent, Lenin was replaced by Timur. Meanwhile, the international networks that had sustained communist rule were being dissolved – the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance in June, the Warsaw Treaty Organisation in July 1991. The following year, Russia led the other post-Soviet republics into the International Monetary Fund and the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development. We were, apparently, all democrats now.

In the event, the changes that took place from 1989 to1991 were often cosmetic. Ruling parties, in some cases, had simply changed their name. The new leaders, it emerged, were often the old ones, who had transferred their allegiance to a more promising agency of political control without losing their authoritarian habits. Privatization, meanwhile, had been more successful in transferring property into the hands of a new elite than in distributing it among the population as a whole. With a weak legal system and an economically precarious, often subservient press, the opportunities for personal enrichment were too powerful to resist. Levels of corruption, however it was to be defined, rose sharply, and social differences widened. The 'new rich' did well, as did their friends in politics; women, the old, the young, the handicapped and the state-funded lost ground, in some cases spectacularly.

But regime change, it became clear, had not come to an end. Corruption, social divisions, external intervention and other factors all played a part. Still more central to the irregular regime changes that took place from 2000 onwards were 'stolen elections': the attempts that were made by incumbent leaderships to maintain their position by falsifying election results so crudely that they precipitated widespread and apparently spontaneous popular resistance. Often, it was an exit poll that cast doubt on the official results, and it was this that led most directly to the public demonstrations that forced a new election and a change of leadership. It was these eruptions of popular discontent that became known as the 'colour(ed) revolutions', and they are the focus of this collection. For understandable reasons, others have

called them 'electoral revolutions'; others still are doubtful that the extent of social change justifies a revolutionary terminology of any kind.

As the editors define them, 'colour revolutions' should be considered as a 'single phenomenon', a sequence of 'non-violent protests that succeeded in overthrowing authoritarian regimes during the first decade of the twenty-first century'. Their focus is the middle years of the decade, when first Georgia, then Ukraine and finally Kyrgyzstan saw incumbent leaderships thrown out of power as they attempted to usurp the ballot box; but they and the various contributors place these events within a wider sequence of political change 'from below' that can be traced back to pre-modern times. The colours, in fact, were often accidental: as the editors explain, the opposition in Kyrgyzstan had not yet made up their own mind on whether they should adopt a symbol (a lemon or a tulip) or a colour (purple, yellow or pink), and it was eventually President Akaev who decided the matter by calling it a 'tulip revolution'.

It is one of the strengths of this collection that it focuses as much on the absence of colour revolution as on its presence. How can we understand what brought about irregular exchange change in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan unless we examine the same factors – and others – in different locations? There was nothing uniquely post-Soviet about these changes. For many, they began no later than 2000, when a 'bulldozer revolution' forced Slobodan Milošević from power as he attempted to subvert the results of a presidential election. For others, they were part of a much wider movement, what Samuel Huntington called the 'third wave', which had its origins in the overthrow of the Portuguese dictatorship in 1974 and which certainly included the upsurge of 'people power' in the Philippines in the late 1970s. For the editors, it is a sequence of changes that is still continuing, as we witness political turbulence in Myanmar, Iran and other locations around the world. But the post-Soviet republics have much in common, and this makes them an ideal 'laboratory' in which the causes and consequences of a series of momentous and apparently related changes can be considered.

Quite properly, the emphasis in this collection is on political change that did not take place as well as on political change that did. Accordingly, the various contributors look much more widely than the three most obvious 'colour revolutions' among the 15 post-Soviet republics; they also consider the cases in which a relative stability prevailed (such as Kazakhstan), and at the cases in which a potential insurgency was checked by force of arms and even bloodshed (most obviously in Uzbekistan in 2005). What was it that explained political change in some post-Soviet republics, but not in others? To what extent was it domestic factors, and to what extent external ones – direct intervention, or demonstration effects? If domestic factors were primary, then which ones: level of development, degrees of social inequality, or nothing more complicated than the balance of influence among competing elites?

There are other themes that recur in this collection: for instance, the international dimension that has just been mentioned. It used to be 'reds under the bed'. Now, apparently, it was non-violent movements of youthful activists, with a copy of Gene Sharp's manual in their hands. Or at least that was how it seemed to the

Kremlin, which spoke of a 'stream of money from abroad' (to quote Putin's 2007 parliamentary address) that had been used to bring about domestic changes that advanced the interests of the foreign states that provided it. But the Kremlin was spending money as well; it just didn't seem to be able to get such a good return on its investment. Ideally, we would like to go beyond elite games to the wider movements of activists, examining their characteristics and motivation. How much of the initiative came 'from above' and how much from the society itself? A time of civil insurgency, however, is not always a good time for social science: the action is on the barricades and within the crowds of demonstrators, not sitting at home and answering the kind of questions that seem meaningful to social scientists from other countries with their own agendas.

What this collection does achieve is to bring both sides into sharper focus: not only elite manoeuvres, but also the popular movements that confronted them. It does so by using a common framework, and engaging specialists with a first-hand knowledge of a varied set of cases. Often, we hear from interviews with high-level participants, and from local publications in the indigenous languages. We hear from NGOs, and from ordinary members of the society, and come close to the events themselves – events that had their own dynamic, quite apart from the circumstances that might have brought them about. It would be too much to say that any collection of this kind can resolve all the issues of interpretation to which the 'coloured revolutions' have given rise. It would not be too much to say that the editors and contributors of this book have given us a firmer, more comprehensive and insightful body of analysis than we have so far had at our disposal in any language.

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1 Introduction

What's in a colour?

> They wished to use the moment to stage an operation like a "colour revolution". The events in Belgrade, Tbilisi, Bishkek and Kiev took place according to such a scenario.
>
> Vladimir Voronin, President of Moldova, 14 April 2009

The end of authoritarian or totalitarian rule and democratization can take many different paths – the death of a dictator, a popular revolution or simply unexpected election results – and lead to a variety of different outcomes. One recent tendency has been the ousting of authoritarian leaders through what have been christened 'colour revolutions'. The term 'colour revolutions' is used to describe as a single phenomenon a number of non-violent protests that succeeded in overthrowing authoritarian regimes during the first decade of the twenty-first century. This has involved thousands of people, wearing coloured symbols, taking to the streets and showing their discontent with the current regime while the opposition, legitimated by such crowds, have been able to negotiate political change with the authorities. Geographically the term has tended to encompass only post-communist countries in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, though there is evidence that similar movements for change have been initiated in the Middle East (Lebanon, 2005) and Asia (Myanmar, 2007).

In recent years we have witnessed an increasing number of protest movements, often making use of non-violent techniques, which seek to challenge a political regime and its elite. The most recent events occurred in Iran in 2009 where, at the time of writing, the ruling class is still uncertain whether to re-open the universities, thus giving the students a way to gather informally, or exercise maximum control after controversial elections sparked street protests. Similar non-violent protest strategies had been used in Myanmar in 2007, with the monks marching in the street to protest against a largely unpopular regime. On a minor scale Malaysia has recently seen street protests challenging the government and protesters have supported democratic choices in Thailand several times since the 2006 coup d'état. Closer to the EU, a state of emergency, declared in 2008 when protesters mobilized against unfair presidential elections, left 10 dead in the Armenian capital of Yerevan, while neighbouring Georgia has experienced several election-related

upheavals in recent years. More than the political results, it is important that we have witnessed an increasing use of non-violent techniques to challenge undemocratic governments all over the world. This might be correlated with the democracy promotion strategies of the US, and to a minor extent the EU, and the fact that bottom up approaches have assumed a major importance in contemporary politics (Bunce and Wolchik 2006, 2007, Tordjman 2008). However, this may also be due to structural factors (Skocpol 1979) and encouraged by a change in political opportunities, as Tarrow (2005) suggests.

Increasing foreign interest in domestic politics can certainly explain much, and insufficient international assistance has led a number of protest movements to fail, like those that challenged Azerbaijan's 2005 parliamentary election results. Moreover, Western influences can be, and increasingly are, counterbalanced and where the EU or US try to gain influence they have often found themselves competing with Russia or China. But while external forces have a role, domestic forces, including the common people themselves, are more often decisive.

To establish the distant origins of this phenomenon conclusively is impracticable, for protests are as old as human history. Likewise, if we take non-violent strategies it would be difficult to agree on a starting point. Would it be fair to credit Gandhi for being the first to organize such massive strikes? Should we pay tribute to the nineteenth-century Irish Land League, whose innovative tactics of complete isolation towards Captain Boycott provided fresh ideas for social movements, not to mention a new word to many languages? Or should we go yet further back in time to Étienne de la Boétie's observations in the sixteenth century on 'voluntary servitude'. There are many precedents for the colour revolution phenomenon recorded in more recent years. Protests aimed at advancing peaceful democratic change were regularly registered in Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe. These took the form of anti-state worker revolts (East Germany in 1953, Poland in 1956 and 1970) or movements that included national communist leaders who favoured weakening domestic authoritarianism and foreign (i.e. Moscow) domination (Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968). The Polish *Solidarność* (Solidarity) movement, which grew out of the Gdańsk shipyards, broke new ground in the early 1980s, amassing 10 million members in a show of unity that forced the communist leadership to negotiate and offer reforms.

Attempts to emulate these successes in the USSR were met with determined resistance by the Kremlin. Through a number of daring and pioneering protests (of which the 'Singing Revolution' was the most innovative) the Baltic peoples broke new ground in the 'science' of peaceful anti-state protest. The most spectacular demonstration of collective will occurred on 23 August 1989 when 2 million people linked hands in a continuous chain from Vilnius in Lithuania through Latvia and on to the Estonian capital, Tallinn in what was known as the 'Baltic Chain'. In 1990 a general strike, gathering workers and students in Kiev, Ukraine, led to the resignation of Prime Minister Masol.

Whatever moment we take as a starting point it is possible to remark that from the second half of the twentieth century, non-violent techniques have been honed and have started to be increasingly used. And while there is always the option of

creating an alternative army, leading on occasion to a coup d'état, the strategy of pacific demonstration against ruling elites or political decisions daily gains new adherents.

While cognizant of similar events that have taken place elsewhere, it is noteworthy that in the past twenty years massive protests against undemocratic regimes have been carried out in most former communist bloc countries. Events in the Baltic States, Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine, Czechoslovakia, and Eastern Germany from 1989 to1991 prompted scholars to revisit the meaning of the word 'revolution' (Bauman 1994) and to ask whether such events, leading to a political change, could be considered revolutions. Subsequently, during the 1990s, Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania, Croatia and Slovakia, to mention the most famous cases, brought forth the expression 'electoral revolutions' (Bunce and Wolchik 2006) for protests organized in the framework of elections.

The phenomenon drifted to neighbouring regions. After a revival in Serbia that ousted President Milošević in 2000, an impressive number of former Soviet republics experienced, to different degrees, protests in the framework of elections. Exceptions include Turkmenistan, where no protests were recorded, Uzbekistan, where they were triggered by the jailing of popular businessmen, and Russia, where pacific protesters were prepared but never deployed. In some cases protests were attempted several times (like Belarus in 2001 and 2006). In others a similar strategy has been used to challenge administrations empowered by a colour revolution (Georgia 2007–8). Comparable attempts have been witnessed in several locations around the world, such as Lebanon in 2005 (the so-called 'Cedar Revolution'), Nepal in 2006, Myanmar in 2007 or, more recently, Iran in 2009.

This book explores these new forms of protests, which, we suggest, seem to have much in common irrespective of their geographical and political diversity. They have all witnessed attempts to challenge political elites through mass protests, the use of non-violent protest strategies and unprecedented civil society activism. Similar strategies, however, have not produced uniform results. In some cases the protests have changed, in a short spell, the political history of the country (Slovakia, Serbia, Georgia and Ukraine for instance) in others they have combined dramatic but cosmetic changes at the top (Kyrgyzstan), whereas in yet other cases change has been negligible thus far, though protests may have laid the foundations for future change (Uzbekistan and Belarus).

The question that prompted us to work on this book might be posed thus: why has a protest strategy that has been successful in some cases failed in others despite sharing many common features? A thorough investigation requires us to engage with a set of questions regarding the nature of such demonstrations, the connection between protest movements in different countries, between external and internal actors and the relationship of citizens with state authorities in different social and political environments.

The limits of a book on colour revolutions

Given the variety of protests that emerged throughout the former socialist space, not to mention around the world, a book that tries to deal with all election-related rallies and demonstrations in recent years would require either an inordinate amount of time, pages, and authors or, in a desperate effort at synthesis, an unacceptably superficial focus on each country. In dealing with a methodological choice, we have opted for a qualitative approach which, whilst being open to challenge for not being representative of all relevant protest movements, allows us a deeper level of analysis. Devoting an entire chapter to each country has the advantage of allowing us to thoroughly investigate most of the possible factors that might influence the outcome of a protest process. It allows us to concentrate on the internal and international dimension of these protests, on the negotiation power enjoyed by government and opposition, and to catch the emotional dimension of relevant movements, for such acts may be considered moments of madness when people abandon daily preoccupations to follow a desire, an aspiration – something they would not do when thinking rationally (Thompson 2003).

With the aim of showing how analogous situations can lead to divergent outcomes, we have chosen to concentrate on a specific region, the former USSR, during a specific period for a number of reasons. First, the post-Soviet republics share common features sufficient to construct a good comparative study. After 1991 they all initiated a (usually cosmetic) democratization process with multiparty elections, while continuing an undemocratic, or only partially democratic, tradition, with curtailed liberties. Subjected to constant scrutiny and pressure from the international community, there were several Western attempts to increase democratic standards, through political dialogue and NGO assistance. They were also closely monitored by the Kremlin, which still claimed a special role in the affairs of its 'near abroad', and feared that a colour revolution virus might potentially contaminate the Russian body politic.

Another reason to concentrate on the post-Soviet region is the time framework. Since 1989 protests in Eastern Europe became increasingly frequent, but it is during the period 2003–6 that they reached an unprecedented regularity. In little more than three years a politically relevant protest was carried out at least once in most countries in the region. Given the frequency of the protests, their interconnection, and the fact that after 2004 even ruling autocratic regimes have tried to emulate colour revolution techniques to counterbalance the protests, we have chosen to make the turbulent years of 2003–6 the primary focus of this book.

Sticking to these criteria – limiting the analysis in time and space – has meant leaving out a number of interesting case studies. For one thing, the Baltic States were part of the USSR and might be considered relevant. However, these three republics experienced protests before the end of the USSR and were extremely keen to leave Moscow's sphere of influence, prompting them to quickly implement a number of fundamental reforms. By the time of the Rose Revolution in 2003, the Baltic States were consolidated democracies on the cusp of EU membership, minimizing the possibility of similar protests there.

There is little doubt that the Baltic protests helped systematize a methodology of protests that future activists were to use. It helped them understand how to deal with Soviet-style structures, while minimizing the risk of street riots during non-violent protests, but, in our opinion, they are a precedent – an experience that suggested how to deal with similar cases – rather than early colour revolutions.

Another questionable choice is to start our examination with the Georgian Rose Revolution of 2003. A prototype of a colour revolution had already been unveiled to the world in 2000, when the 'Bulldozer Revolution' shook Serbia, changing its political fate and ousting Slobodan Milošević, Serbia's dominant political figure since 1989. Opposition victories in the 1996 municipal elections, which Milošević only recognized after three months of wrangling, had provided anti-Milošević parties access to institutional resources vital to mobilizing the population. For the 2000 election, the opposition rallied behind the popular Vojislav Koštunica and vigilant election monitoring and exit polling suggested that he had taken more than half of the vote in a five-man race. When official results did not tally, ten days of protests followed. These included a general strike and reached a crescendo on 5 October, when hundreds of thousands of people converged on Belgrade to join existing demonstrations. Activists broke into and occupied the federal parliament and state television station, while the police withdrew and the Yugoslav army stayed in barracks. Bowing to the inevitable, Milošević resigned on 6 October and Koštunica was sworn in as President the following day.

Since then, Serbian activists have been invited to lead training in non-violent resistance in many other countries. Belgrade now hosts the Centre for Applied Non-Violent Action and Strategies, whose tasks include explaining and training how to 'make a revolution' and whose activists have been declared persona non grata in several countries threatened by a colour revolution (Krivokapic 2005). The Serbian Bulldozer Revolution was not, however, the first time an 'electoral revolution' strategy was used, only the first time that it led to mass protests. Bunce and Wolchik (2007) report at least four other cases that helped to perfect this strategy: Serbia in 1996–97, Romania in 1996, Bulgaria in 1997, and Slovakia in 1998. Although all four cases are noteworthy, it is the latter one that has most relevance for our analysis of protests movements. In Slovakia, parliamentary elections in 1998 were seen as the last chance to regain international credibility. Though political activism in Slovakia was low during the 1990s, the NGO sector had thrived since independence and in February 1998, 35 NGOs initiated Civic Campaign '98 (Občianska kampaň OK '98) for free and fair elections. The campaign estimated that the incumbent Prime Minister, Vladimír Mečiar, was highly unpopular but that only a massive turnout would succeed in giving victory to the opposition and thus actively sought to mobilize the largely untapped reservoir of youthful opposition to the government. In 1994 less than 25 per cent of eligible young voters had participated in elections and in 1998 young and first-time voters were a potentially powerful oppositional force. The anti-Mečiar campaign was based on monitoring government activities and the election itself, and an aggressive information campaign. Amongst the activities organized to increase awareness was a fourteen-day march, live performances and public meetings. In

major cities national artists emphasized the importance of electoral participation and delivered their message at numerous rock concerts, while an election bus visited 17 cities in September 1998 to promote the value of voting. As a result of these myriad activities, 84 per cent of voters went to the polls (the 1994 elections had seen a 75.65 per cent turnout) and Mečiar was replaced by Mikuláš Dzurinda, leader of the Slovak Democratic Coalition. In attempting to oust the political elite in Slovakia a double campaign was initiated: a positive one to bring people to the polls and a negative one to emphasize the regime's dark side. It was during the Civic Campaign '98 that this strategy was fully deployed and delivered results, bringing people to the polls and discrediting the regime to the extent that it lost majority support.

Similarly, our decision not to examine in detail election-related protests after 2006, as in Georgia, Armenia and Moldova, might be questionable but is influenced by the sheer volume of possible case studies and the consequent need to make editorial decisions, not just in terms of states but in terms of time. The 2003–6 period is the most active and presents us with successful protests, transnational networks and external influences but also authoritarian backlashes and countermeasures. The protests, and the strategies presented, are close enough to allow us to better understand their origins and evolution. Moreover, they have evolved so rapidly in those three years that, by analyzing them, we may better understand the nature and significance of this type of protest movement.

We are particularly happy with the group of writers assembled for this endeavour. To provide the reader with an in-depth analysis, we decided that each chapter should be written not merely by a regional expert but a country-specialist with first-hand experience. Having worked in the former USSR for the best part of a decade we have relied primarily on our colleagues, past and present, and are delighted they have agreed to work with us and share their expertise.

What Revolutions?

The term 'revolution' has been used in so many contexts that some argue that it has lost its original meaning (Zimmerman 1983). Certainly, since 1989, a new wave of protest movements triggered a 'revolution in the theory of revolution' (Bauman 1994), challenging traditional understandings of the term in several ways (Robertson 1993). Up to that point, revolution had been understood as a total transformation of global significance (Griewank 1955 [1973]; Kosseleck 1969) or even 'a major, sudden, and hence typically violent alteration in government and related association structures', as *Encyclopaedia Britannica* defined it. Revolution and violence have been used synonymously (Rule 1988) and until recently a revolution that could aid or facilitate democracy was inconceivable (Thompson 2003). However, scholars like Gene Sharp have long maintained that anti-dictatorship struggles, if carried out in a non-violent way, can foster democratic principles (Sharp 1993).

This ambiguity of the word revolution became even more problematic as protest movements started to spread, with increasing frequency and with less

recourse to violence. After the term 'electoral revolution' was introduced by Tismaenanu (1997) and Bunce and Wolchik (2006, 2007), 'colour revolutions' rapidly became a popular phrase to classify non-violent protests arising from rigged elections, especially in the former socialist world. These colour revolutions have followed a similar pattern: in the framework of an electoral contest a civic campaign to guarantee free and fair elections is set up. Normally, local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) take the lead (often coordinated with political forces) and benefit from 'know how' acquired through international trainings and manuals. Through a joint effort, civil society and political actors follow a two-pronged strategy: they seek to discredit the regime (negative campaign) while pushing people to go to the polls (positive campaign). The assumption is that, where the regime is sufficiently unpopular, a high turnout will allow a resourceful opposition to win the elections. The second part of this strategy relies on the assumption that the authorities might not play fair with the election results. Once the regime refuses to acknowledge the election results (by falsifying them or simply refusing to step down), people are called on to the streets and a general strike is called until the status quo changes (this may mean that the authorities step down or that they crush the protesters) (Ó Beacháin and Polese 2010, White and Lane 2010).

These colour revolution protests occur in connection with national elections, as electoral campaigns see a higher politicization of the country. Elections are considered propitious occasions to inspire protesters, partially because they sometimes provide a rare opportunity to mobilize and demonstrate with relative impunity, as international observers are usually present. Elections provide a chance for a disenchanted population to offer a judgment, and when that right is taken from the electorate through vote rigging or other forms of manipulation, these transgressions can provide further stimuli for action.

The symbolism of colour revolutions, prompted by a need to be visible, identifiable, and to promote solidarity among protesters, deserves special mention. The Rose Revolution owed its name to flower-wielding protesters and the Orange Revolution arose from the colour adopted by the anti-Kuchma demonstrators. Such was the impact of these two events, so alluring the tactics, and so impressive the results, that most oppositionists in the post-Soviet space tried to manufacture a similar brand for their regime-change efforts. This led within a short time to a proliferation of putative symbols or colours deemed emblematic of the coming revolution. So mandatory did it become that oppositionists in Kyrgyzstan still hadn't unanimously settled on whether to adopt a symbol (lemon or tulip) or a colour (purple, yellow or pink) before President Akaev, by vowing to quash efforts to make a 'Tulip Revolution', decided the matter.

Though colour revolutions are a complex phenomenon it is possible, nevertheless, to cluster the actors and actions in order to have a more systematic comparative view of the colour revolutions. In the course of our research we have come to identify five main points, or variables, around which to construct an analysis to better identify and understand the factors that contributed to the success, or failure, of a colour revolution. The first variable relates to the character of the

state on the eve of the protests. Much depends on the attitude of elites and their commitment to democracy. None of the 12 countries analyzed here was classifiable as democratic before the advent of the colour revolutions (Linz and Stepan 1996, Freedom House 2003–2006), but it is undeniable that some presented more democratic tendencies than others in terms of freedom of expression, impartiality and independence of media, repressive potential and attitudes to political pluralism. Relatively democratically oriented elites are more likely to allow the preconditions for a colour revolution to take root by allowing the development of civil society, permitting the opposition more freedom to organize (or simply allowing it to be legal, which is not the case in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), tolerating foreign influences in domestic affairs and, in general, not hindering popular political participation to the extent whereby it is impossible to hold mass demonstrations. A democratic and permissive attitude might not necessarily derive from a genuine desire for democracy but might be dictated by necessity. A lack of economic resources might prompt the elite to be more Western-friendly in exchange for greater financial aid. Alternatively, the elite in power might present some signs of fragmentation, given that conflicts for power inject factionalism, so 'the regime' is far from monolithic. This can sometimes result in elite defections to the opposition during a political crisis or to opportunistic bandwagoning as power leaks from the incumbent powers and flows onto the streets.

The second variable is the opposition. A compact opposition is a *sine qua non* for a number of reasons. If opposition leaders are engaged in a struggle for power against one another they will be unable to challenge pro-presidential elites and will tend to steal voters from one another rather than the ruling regime. Only when the opposition can unite the anti-regime elements in the electorate can they try to convince those who are undecided or on whom the regime depends. Furthermore, if the opposition itself is fragmented, external actors (and the electorate itself) will be confused and disheartened by the presence of so many leaders. It is important to highlight the conditions in which the opposition operates: the opposition might be illegal, with the international community unable to express support without positioning itself openly against the regime. The ability to unite is also affected by the presence of charismatic leaders able to rouse the population and give concrete shape to popular discontent by formulating a concrete programme of action. Finally, the strength of the opposition is also measurable through the economic means they have at their disposal. If the economic elite are fully backing the government, it will be difficult for the opposition to find the means to mount a challenge.

Although we agree that external influences have been a key element in the protests and we use it as a third variable, we consider them of secondary importance. It would be an erroneous assumption that the US and the EU, by pumping money into a country, can by themselves change the destiny of individual post-Soviet countries. While development aid does give external actors a say, experience demonstrates that aid may not reach its targets at the local level but rather may simply end up in an autocrat's foreign bank account (Stieglitz 2003). In addition, external influences are strongly affected by a number of factors other than

the ideological or political. In oil-rich countries, for instance, the influence of external actors is limited, as foreign money is seen only as an asset in addition to domestic resources and not a vital necessity for the local economy, as is the case for countries that have few natural resources. It is important to assess the relationship between the national elite and foreign forces, as diplomatic pressures may apply; by the same token, foreign support to the opposition, when possible, could be a strong factor. As mentioned earlier, foreign aid comes as a result of a *do ut das* compromise, a return from the country is expected in terms of support for democracy or enhanced diplomatic relations. However, it is important to explore how the instructions of foreign powers are perceived and interpreted at the local level. Do recipients follow a suggested path because they believe in it or because they think it is the best way to gain access to financial resources? There is also the question of to what extent external forces have succeeded in influencing domestic policies.

External forces can penetrate a country through political and economic channels but recent tendencies have shown that foreign powers are also keen to concentrate on civil society (Tordjman 2008), which is the fourth variable. Given its particular position between politics and the polity, it is important to explore the significance of civil society. This varies from country to country and depends on historical traditions, current human resources, practical knowledge and financial assets. It is also useful to understand what influence civil society has on a country's politics and popular attitudes and behaviour. The fifth and final variable we analyze is the people. The people can be considered the main point of the revolution, given that power depends on people, directly or indirectly (Moore Jr. 1980). As important as an organized movement is the silent struggle of people who can individually refuse to support the government (Scott 1984). However, as street protests are a major tool of the opposition, it is important to understand how and why people react to stimuli from politics and civil society and to what extent they are able to organize by themselves or to follow a leader. Pertinent questions include: how motivated do individual activists become during the process and how much are they willing to risk? How do the authorities and the opposition perceive these people? Does the opposition think that their help is crucial? Do the authorities overlook them because they feel the people will never represent a threat, or do their actions provoke greater authoritarianism?

It is important to remark that an analysis of these five points does not endow us with the gift of clairvoyance. If a protest seems to meet most or even all these conditions it does not follow that it will axiomatically lead to some radical change. Accordingly, our analysis seeks to be qualitative rather than quantitative: it is not simply a question of whether the opposition is compact or the regime is fragmented but to what extent the opposition is compact or the regime is fragmented; matters that can only be explored through providing a qualitative analysis, which is what our contributors have been asked to do. As a result, our approach has two primary innovations if compared with existing literature on colour revolutions. First, we consider a colour revolution to be the result of a set of qualitative variables and, second, we devote equal attention to 'failed' colour revolutions as 'successful'

ones. The rationale for undertaking a rigorous examination of 'unsuccessful' colour revolutions stems from a wish to rectify an imbalance in the literature whereby colour revolution attempts that did not produce regime change are relegated by scholars to the rank of minor distractions, if that. Whereas this is a perfectly reasonable approach when examining the political history of a single country (and there has been a plethora of works on, for example, the Orange Revolution) it nevertheless risks undermining our understanding of colour revolutions as a highly significant political phenomenon. What if the protests were very well organized, the opposition strong, but the government so repressive that no political change was recorded? Can we dismiss such cases without neglecting vital aspects of colour revolutions?

Aware of theoretical gaps in the colour revolutions literature, we have asked the authors to concentrate on all five points, and to place their case study in a broader framework, the better to compare the revolutions and draw lessons on what can fail and why, and identify the strong points of such strategies. The first part of the book deals with the spreading of colour revolutions in post-Soviet spaces and explores the escalating phase, characterized by a rapid diffusion of the phenomenon and the incapacity of post-Soviet authorities to contain it. To start with, Francoise Companien illustrates the main features of the Georgian Rose Revolution and Nathaniel Copsey explores Ukraine's Orange Revolution. For some months after Yushchenko's triumph, the colour revolution phenomenon seemed to be on the crest of a wave, so that even a country like Kyrgyzstan, with limited civil society and popular participation, witnessed a similar event, as narrated by David Lewis. The book continues with an exploration of the limits of such a strategy in countries like Armenia (Mikayel Zolyan), Moldova (Ryan Patrick Kennedy) and Azerbaijan (Vicken Cheterian), where the authorities were still incapable of properly dealing with an emboldened civil society and non-violent protests, but colour revolutions followed by regime change did not occur.

This book also explores the antidotes for the coloured virus and the de-escalating phase of the colour revolutions. From Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Revolution onwards, post-Soviet regimes learned how to contain civil movements, suppress the opposition and limit external influences on domestic politics. The result is a strategy that blends isolationism with violent repression of pro-democratic movements, effectively preventing further colour revolutions. The first such case presented here is Belarus, documented by Ustina Markus, where a colour revolution has been twice attempted. Russia is a pivotal case, as Thomas Ambrosio shows, for it provides an early case of how the ruling regime can appropriate and emulate tactics previously employed by colour revolutionaries and use them to bolster the regime (the establishment of a pro-Kremlin youth movement, Nashi, being a striking example) One lesson we can learn is that the regime, at this point, possessed an impressive arsenal to stop a colour revolution, as documented by Matteo Fumagalli and Simon Tordjman for Uzbekistan, where brutal repression follows the logic of the old Stalinist maxim: liquidate the person and you liquidate the problem (*net cheloveka, net problemy*). Our final set of case studies illustrates how a combination of adroit regime efforts to limit civil society and popular political

passivity has stymied any attempt at colour revolution in Tajikistan (Robert Kevlihan and Amri Sherzamonov), Kazakhstan (Rico Isaacs) and Turkmenistan (Donnacha Ó Beacháin).

Donnacha Ó Beacháin

Abel Polese

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2 Georgia

Francoise J. Companjen

With the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the abolition of both the Warsaw Pact and the Comecon, the Republic of Georgia was one of the 15 former Union republics to begin a transition towards a state based on market economy and democracy, in 1991. The course of events varied between the Newly Independent States and was far from even-paced within Georgia itself. Some of these transitions away from communism ended up in revolutions, some did not. In keeping with the main topic of this book, the analysis of revolutions, the present chapter will focus on the Georgian Revolution of Roses (often known in English translation as the 'Rose Revolution') as seen through five factors – the character of the regime, the opposition, external forces, civil society and the people. The information used to highlight these aspects is based on qualitative research done in Tbilisi between 1996 and 2006, interviews with NGO leaders, members of parliament, journalists, key informants, and donor organizations. Hopefully the particularities retrieved directly from the field will add some local colour when answering the question: what happened in the run up to the Revolution, and why?

We need to bear in mind that ever since Georgia had declared itself independent under the leadership of Zviad Gamsakhurdia in Spring 1991, it was a country in transition towards democracy and a free market economy with a long way to go, coming from a totalitarian, closed society. Enhancing democracy is something done by individuals, but contrary to what the transition paradigm, as summarized by Carothers (2002: 5–21) assumes, these individuals are embedded in some kind of structure, in cultural and historical settings that may confine their activity. Research (Hofstede 1995; Inglehart 2000) confirms the path dependency and restraints of culture but also that of economic development. In other words, certain correlations can be seen between economic growth and cultural change in the direction of individualism, a cultural dimension. Therefore, the five factors we delve into from 2003 to 2006 have been taking shape during a longer process of cultural and economic development since independence with various false starts, set backs and hybridization between habits from communist times and liberal ideology. On an individual level we see bricolages of individuals trying to simultaneously change their environment and make sense of the different mindsets, fault lines and foreign influences in their society. For example, the Georgian elite may identify with the West, but their understanding of Western post-industrial society may be poor. An

NGO leader may want to introduce democratic ideas, but does so using examples from Communist times, the frame of reference he knows best.

After the (civil) wars of 1991/1992 and 1992/1993, Georgians had an idea what dire consequences protests could have. For a long time they were reluctant to take to the streets for any kind of action, with the exception of freedom of speech and media (in 1991 and in 2001). Next to these two major events there was the odd protest against lack of electricity. Therefore the question of what incited people to massively take to the streets in 2003 is even more intriguing. Let us have a look at the Rose Revolution itself and then analyze the period shortly before and after it through the prism of the five factors mentioned above.

The Revolution of Roses in Tbilisi[1]

In the days that followed the elections held in Tbilisi on 2 November 2003, thousands of people rallied in front of the City Council and the Parliament building, to protest about the manipulation of votes. Even before the count was complete, Georgia's Central Elections Committee (CEC) had announced that the 'bloc'[2] of President Shevardnadze, For New Georgia, was leading in the elections with 21.32 per cent, whileSaakashvili's National Movement had 'only' 18.08 per cent. The results from exit polls and parallel voter tabulation showed an opposite tendency: 26.60 per cent for Saakashvili and 'only' 18.92 per cent for Shevardnadze.

Contrary to elections in previous years, this time, thanks to practice and experience acquired during the elections of 1999 and 1995, civil society actors had accumulated proof of fraud and had access to media outlets to spread this information. Several techniques to monitor the elections had been sharpened. The American Global Strategy Group had organized exit polls together with four Georgian organizations: The Business Consulting Group (BCG), the Centre for Sociological Research, the Ilia Chavchavadze University's Social Science department and the Institute for Polling and Marketing (IPM). The American funded International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) had organized parallel voter tabulation. The results were presented to the public at large through the non-governmental radio and TV station Rustavi 2. Election experts showed that voter lists were inaccurate. Thousands of citizens were omitted from various lists, thereby not allowing these people to vote. This (substantiated) information added to the tangible reasons for doubting the fairness of the elections.

Foreign watchdogs, generally more conservative in their election reports than the local NGO reports, were now (3 November 2003 and after) also critical in their evaluation of the elections. The US Government, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe, and the European Parliament had sent special representatives to observe before and during elections, with some 450 international observers. The OSCE, the Council of Europe, and the European Parliament concluded the elections fell short of international standards and referred to shortcomings in the system, including the use of different voter lists. Supposedly there had been 3,178,593 million voters. However the Central Election Commission preparing the presidential elections of January 2004 estimated the true

electorate to be about 2,130,000 (see www.eurasianet.org/geovote08/observer/index.shtml)

On 4 November 2003, the leaders of the opposition parties the National Movement and the Burjanadze Democrats met to discuss joint measures. A rally was held in front of the Tbilisi Municipality, with thousands of people participating.

The following day the US Embassy to Georgia raised concerns over the Central Elections Commission's delay in providing a final account of the votes and two days later, on 7 November, Nino Burjanadze declared that she would boycott these elections and refuse to work in and with this parliament. Shevardnadze stated on the state TV channel that the Open Society George Soros Foundation was funding the opposition, thereby interfering in Georgia's internal affairs. About twenty thousand people gathered in front of the Georgian Parliament in support of the opposition, demanding that the complete election results be given (see www.civil.ge).

On 9 November, president Shevardnadze had a phone conversation with president Putin about these developments and had a meeting with the opposition leaders without reaching an agreement. Mikheil Saakashvili, Nino Burjanadze and Zurab Zhvania gave the President an ultimatum: recognize the elections were violated by calling new elections, or resign. Giorgi Kandelaki, at that time a student and activist of youth movement *Kmara!* involved in NGO work, recorded Shevardnadze as saying, 'I do not intend to resign at the demand of individual politicians and a few dozen young people waving flags. If there were at least a million people, it would have been different' (Kandelaki 2006).

By that time not only had the number of people taking to the streets increased up to 50,000 or more, but within just a few days, a national petition was handed in, demanding Shevardnadze's resignation. In the meantime, he had decided to talk with the head of the Autonomous Republic Adjara, his erstwhile rival Aslan Abashidze, to try to secure his support. Abashidze, leader of the Revival Party, backed him up. With his help a pro-Shevardnadze rally was held in Tbilisi on 18 November. Bus-loads of people were driven in from Batumi, the capital of Adjara. Levan Mamaladze, governor of the Kvemo Kartli region and also supportive of Shevardnadze, accused Rustavi 2 of being biased and supporting the opposition. It is true that Rustavi 2 was supportive of the opposition. After three serious attempts by various governmental officials to close their TV-radio station down, the owners of Rustavi 2 and their reporters were critical of the Shevardnadze regime.

The 'war' between parties continued through the media. The pro-government First Channel of the National Television and Adjara TV included stories of people who died in 1990s civil unrest around the independence movement, thereby, according to some interpretations, subtly issuing a threat or warning. The moral blackmail had worked during previous elections, when Eduard Shevardnadze presented the choice between unrest and chaos (such as was the case before his rule) or the stability provided by his government.

Eighteen days after the elections the Central Election Commission, who had been counting and recounting votes and taking a long time to do this, finally announced that Shevardnadze's bloc, together with Abashidze's Revival Party, formed a majority of votes and that they had definitely won the elections. By now,

20 November, the protesters had doubled in number again to over a 100,000. Just as Shevardnadze was opening the new Parliament on Saturday 22 November 2003, hundreds of supporters of the opposition leader, Mikheil Saakashvili, stormed into the Parliament building, not restrained by guards or police. As could be seen on CNN footage, Shevardnadze himself wanted to stay, calling, 'Let the public see what is happening', but he was simply swept out of the Parliament building by his bodyguards, as the crowd forced itself in. Outside, Shevardnadze told the crowd he would not let himself be pushed out this way.

Shevardnadze had another call with Putin, and after Eduard Shevardnadze was chased out of parliament, the Russian foreign minister, Igor Ivanov, flew in in order to speak with him, with the opposition and also with the Adjaran leader Abashidze. By Sunday late afternoon/early evening President Shevardnadze had formally resigned. The interim President, Nino Burjanadze, announced new elections would be held within forty-five days.

The boundaries of any event are always somewhat arbitrary and so is the revolutionary period. There is a lot to say for letting it start right after the 2 November 2003 elections and letting it end with Shevardnadze's resignation on Sunday 23 November 2003. The story does not end here, however, because in fact, a smaller revolution occurred in its direct aftermath in Adjara, with pro-Russian leader Aslan Abashidze fleeing to Moscow. A new leader was appointed, who accepted Tbilisi as the central authority. The revolutionary period therefore can be divided into three parts: the first seven days of November when it was really unclear whether protests would add up to any change and when foreign powers still contented themselves with ritualistic condemnations. The second part of the revolutionary period only began after the ultimatum that was set (Shevardnadze to stand down or call new elections) with masses increasing to 50,000 and even to a 100,000 from 20 November and went until his resignation on 23 November. Foreign powers simultaneously asserted pressure on Shevardnadze not to use force against these masses. Then finally, there is the third period, beginning with new president Saakashvili being elected on 4 January 2004 with 96 per cent of the votes, and ending on 6 May 2004, after the revolution had extended to Adjara.

In the three weeks between the elections of 2 November and the resignation of 23 November, we have the ingredients of the Rose Revolution, such as the regime, the opposition, foreign influences, civil society including the media, and the people, all playing a major role in the unfolding drama. What gave the general public an incentive to take to the streets? Was the Shevardnadze regime that bad? Was it too liberal or too weak?

The Shevardnadze Regime and its Opposition

Eduard Shevardnadze, in power from March 1992 to November 2003, was hated in Russia for having helped dissolve the Soviet Union, and was considered a hero in the West for the same reason. He initially had public support for bringing back order and stability to Georgia after the civil war. Even though he was not liked by the nationalist Gamsakhurdia fans, and was deemed to have 'sold Georgia out

to Russia during the civil war', it could not be denied that economic growth did occur under his regime between 1994 and 1999 and that he had taken measures to embed Georgia in international institutions such as the UN, the IMF, the Council of Europe, and in due course exploratory talks about NATO membership were held. Programmes to enhance democracy and civil society were set up, with some initial results. The positive developments faded after 1999, however, and even more so between 2001 and 2003. Social and economic conditions were terrible for a majority of people. As is brilliantly portrayed in the award-winning documentary 'Powertrip' (Devlin 2003), despite major foreign donations to improve infrastructure, electricity and water were cut off for many hours each day, hampering any kind of serious activity. There was no solution in sight for restoring Georgia's territorial integrity and the 250,000 people displaced from the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Shevardnadze was a communist by training and experience and was in his mid-sixties when he came back to Georgia. He had been First Secretary of the Communist Party in Georgia since 1972, before being called to Moscow for the post of Foreign Minister under Gorbachev. To retrieve a basis of power when he returned to Georgia, he capitalized on his network of nomenclature friends, unfamiliar with governance according to democratic principles and free market economy. Even in trying to follow the course to democracy, through a new constitution (Presidential Democracy) and through elections and by passing laws laying a foundation for democracy, he had trouble estimating the value of civil activity in his country. This is probably the reason why he didn't interfere with NGO initiatives more. After all, the 'third sector', as it is also referred to, was absent during his career in the Communist Party. The understanding of some kind of dynamic relation between people organized in self-interest groups and government was limited, as became clear during the long, personal speech he gave on 9 September 1999 during a meeting between NGO representatives and a few donor organizations. Once civil society was 'built' it simply was there. The idea that an NGO could also mean a force controlling or challenging government in a context of rule of law was absent in his speech. On the contrary, a governmental branch needed to be established for maintaining good relations with NGOs. The communist frame of reference is present in this speech, and it could hardly be otherwise.

Shevardnadze's geo-political strategy was one of careful balancing between the Russian and American influence. In spite of these tightrope politics, at least two attempts were made to take his life – one on 29 August 1995 and one on 9 February 1998. The last attack was executed by 10 to 15 Chechen mercenaries, one of whom was killed in the process. The others escaped. The assassination attempts[3] were traced back to Russia, which wanted to destabilize Georgia because of plans for building a pipeline from Baku across Georgia to Ceyhan Turkey, thereby breaking the Russian monopoly of gas and oil to Europe. This has not been confirmed, however. Although the balancing between Russia and the US was clever from a foreign policy point of view, from a people's point of view, it was difficult to tell which way Georgia was heading: towards Russia or towards the West? Respondents used expressions such as 'We live without a compass' or 'We are heading somewhere

but we don't know where. We live without light'. (Companjen 2004: 57) Some parents, for example, did not know whether to have their children learn Russian or English and of course there were deeper implications attached to this choice – namely which set of values to follow?

During the Shevardnadze period reforms lagged behind, especially in the department of justice, energy and education. Both people in the street and NGO leaders were worried by the rampant corruption. 'What can we expect from a society up to its neck in a bog?' (Companjen 2004: 288). This feeling was widespread and people openly put their hopes on the next generation because the situation they found themselves in was too difficult and complex to change.

A new generation of young politicians, the so-called Young Reformists, were only too eager to do things their way. One of their challenges was how to get more power without having to comply with the system they were trying to change. The main reformist players were Mikheil Saakashvili, trained as a lawyer both during the Soviet period in Kiev and thereafter in New York's Columbia University; Zurab Zhvania, a half-Armenian Jew, trained as a biologist and a prominent Green activist who in return for political support was rewarded by Shevardnadze, who appointed him as Speaker of Parliament; and Nino Burjanadze, who as the daughter of a wealthy father, studied law in Tbilisi and Moscow and taught at the Tbilisi State University before going into politics around 1995. Although all three initially worked for Shevardnadze's Citizens Union of Georgia (CUG) party, they gradually distanced themselves from him, and eventually founded their own parties. Saakashvili, although appointed as Minister of Justice, resigned after ten months when confronted with corruption he could not change single-handedly.

The Rustavi 2 crisis and municipal elections of 2001 marked a clear point in time for the Young Reformists to transform into opposition. The government's attempt to illegally close down the independent radio and TV station gave them a good reason to break with the CUG party. When Rustavi 2 called on the public to take to the streets as soon as government officials entered the Rustavi 2 building in the Vake-Saburtalo district, supporters, especially women, took to the streets and gathered outside the building. The protest grew and was joined by NGO leaders, who adeptly transformed this wave of anger into anti-government speeches, drawing on Western discourses, pleading for change from the residue of Soviet mentality that lay below a thin and formal veneer of democracy. The government fell. Three weeks later a virtually identical cabinet was re-established, but with some small changes and one major change: the Speaker of Parliament Zurab Zhvania was replaced by Nino Burjanadze. Burjanadze later also left the CUG, and established the Burjanadze Democrats in 2002.

Between the mass protest in 2001 and the elections of November 2003, Georgia could be characterized as a weak state, if not a failed one. The police force was large but very corrupt and ill-equipped. Their old ladas formed a sharp contrast with the fast BMWs owned by private citizens and higher governmental officials. Higher police officials were reportedly involved in kidnappings, drug deals and smuggling (Loria and Gegeshidze 2006). The military was minimally trained, not ready for battle and had to go on strike to receive some form of salary to survive.

They may have had guns but sometimes had no shoes. The border areas were notoriously weak, with language and identity problems (Melikishvili 1999). In the south people were and still are principally familiar with either Armenian or Azeri and cannot participate properly in local elections or events organized in the Georgian language. Thousands of people had and still have both Armenian and Georgian passports tending to their needs in the Armenian capital Yerevan rather than the Georgian capital Tbilisi.

There was little rule of law. The judicial system was struggling to operate independently. Human rights, especially in prisons, were systematically abused. Laws were passed but since corruption had infested every layer of society, many laws were either not implemented or implemented only if this served the interests of the Shevardnadze 'clan', meaning members of an informal professional network without a registered structure. Complaints about elections could not be filed with an independent organization; the ombudsman had little autonomous influence. Many people at all levels complained about the 'syndrome of non-punishment'. Foreign entrepreneurs moved out: it was too expensive to do business in Georgia with the corruption and weak legal framework in spite of the high unemployment and Georgia's reputation of having a highly educated population. Almost half the population was poor and pensioners received symbolic allowances that were barely enough to buy bread.

Shevardnadze was under pressure from family members and friends with big business interests. With the convergence of big business and government at the top, for example in the lucrative mobile phone industry, the Shevardnadze clan was occupied with protecting its own interests rather than with building a strong state. The lack of general authoritarianism outside of the power ministries was a side effect, not a conscious choice for liberalism.

Foreign Influence and Civil Society

By becoming a member of the United Nations and the Council of Europe and accepting money from donor organizations such as USAID, Georgia opened its doors to foreign influence through conditional financial programmes and grants. Besides money for infrastructural projects such as roads, environmental projects, schools and electricity, many grants were oriented towards stimulating a non-governmental sector. The assumption of foreign donors such as the Open Society Georgia Foundation ('Soros Foundation') was that NGOs were both less corrupt than government organizations and that the NGOs could facilitate and encourage processes at the grass-roots level, such as learning about computers and other educational programmes involving journalism, economy or management.

The Institute for Soviet American Relations (ISAR) was one of the first to open an office in Tbilisi in 1994 to facilitate the development of a non-governmental sector. By 1997 about 3,200 public associations (including public media and political parties) were established. The Civil Code replaced the Public Code in 1997 and all NGOs had to re-register in the court of their district. By October 1999, 1,338 NGOs had re-registered in Tbilisi in the five district courts. Foundations re-registered at

the Ministry of Justice. More NGOs registered in courts throughout the country, but due to lack of computerization an exact overview was lacking for many years. In various reports (i.e. USAID) the number of NGOs was placed between 4,000 and 5,000 by 2003. These varied from environmental NGOs to human rights to civil society NGOs and all kinds of associations defending the interests of particular groups of people. (Companjen 2004: 3, 19–24)

How was the third sector being developed? The period 1992–95 was characterized by the establishment of NGOs, the learning of how to apply for grants, the acquisition of computers and getting access to the internet. 1995–2001 was characterized by developing professionalism: following courses abroad, learning about management, how to organize press conferences, how to conduct need assessments of societal and economic information, how to conduct exit polls and voter tabulation during elections. In this period the viable NGOs were sorted from the nominal ones. Only about 50 to 60 NGOs had projects and of these about ten were actively involved in enhancing democracy and democratic values. (Nodia 2005; Companjen 2004)

Just before the 1999 elections, alliances of NGOs were established, hoping for grants in exchange for political support. But with Shevardnadze and his CUG winning all elections, and in view of the kind of nominalNGOs that signed up, these alliances did not bear fruit. Sometimes governmental NGOs (GONGOS) would be established with government officials appointing a straw man (a brother or wife) as a formal leader. One of the most notorious of these governmental figures was Levan Mamaladze, the Governor of Kwemo Kartli, who had 40 NGOs, including those in the health and social security sectors, grouping them into an alliance for greater impact.

In 2001 and thereafter, various functioning NGOs became more politicized, the main reason being that the fall of the government following the mass protests over the closing down of Rustavi 2 opened their eyes to the power of the people and the power of an independent TV station. The process of politicization coincided with the Reformists positioning themselves more independently from the CUG by establishing their own political parties for the presidential (2003) and parliamentary elections (2004) coming up. The Young Reformists and NGO leaders cooperated with each other. This time reciprocity worked because there was something to exchange: grants for support, or expertise for political negotiations.

The roles played by some prominent NGO leaders moved from academic activities towards more involvement in politics and on how to change things. New fault lines in strategy became apparent. At the time some prominent think tanks such as the Caucasus Institute for Peace Democracy and Development (CIPDD) 'Nodia's institute') advocated constitutional methods of change. Others such as the International Centre for Civil Development (ICCD, 'Levan Berdzenishvili's centre') did not exclude non-constitutional, though peaceful methods, although changes of minds may have occurred after the Rose Revolution.

The reason why some NGO leaders became more focused on change was that they could not see Shevardnadze resigning regardless of election results. This opinion was shared by the larger public. One of the questions in a survey conducted

by the International Fair Elections Society (ISFED) was 'whose data on election results would you trust more, the data from the Central Election Committee, of the exit poll coalition or of the Fair Elections committee?' The answers were 4 per cent, 40 per cent and 40 per cent respectively. (Khutsishvili, 2008) In the assessment of the ICCD, the NGO-sector especially in cooperation with the opposition forces was stronger than the ruling party. (www.civil.ge 2002: September 5). The NGO sector was better educated and experienced in giving speeches, organizing press conferences, lobbying internationally, than Shevardnadze's nomenclature friends. Besides, ministries were generally ill equipped. The functioning NGOs had money, equipment, and knowledge.

In order to assess possible foreign influence on the Rose Revolution we need to make a distinction between long-term enhancement of civil society, and short-term actual interventions during the revolutionary weeks in November 2003. The development of a third sector with foreign aid in the years and months preceding the Rose Revolution is generally acknowledged. Levan Ramishvili of the Liberty Institute takes this claim a step further by including foreign influence in the revolutionary period itself: '… but without foreign assistance I'm not sure we would have been able to achieve what we did without bloodshed' (Global Security, no date). George Kandelaki however, although co-initiator of *Kmara*, points out the contrary when it comes to the revolutionary period itself:

> During the revolution, not only were Western actors unhelpful, but at times they were actually detrimental. For example, Georgian civil society members had to work hard to convince some Council of Europe officials that the Revival and Industrialist parties could not be considered opposition parties. Ambassador Miles not only did not 'mastermind' the revolution; on occasion his actions and statements were quite destructive. Favouring protracted negotiations, he strongly discouraged decisive action by the opposition and considered Mikheil Saakashvili dangerously radical. In short, even in the critical preliminary report by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Western leaders showed little desire to support decisive action. (Kandelaki 2006).

Also, the leaders of the Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF) during that period, Alexander Lomaia (executive director) and Misha Chachkhunashvili (chair of the executive council of the OSGF) deny any claim of direct interference in the Rose Revolution. At most the Soros Foundation, as the OSGF is also called, spent less than half a million dollars on preparations for the elections, such as exit polls and campaigns encouraging the people to vote. The OSGF leaders stress that *Kmara* did not apply for any grant, that if they received any funding it was indirectly through a local NGO[4] and that the money involved in *Kmara* was about posters, training and flying in some adviser's from Serbia (Nizharadze and Companjen 2008: 103–4). The rumour about direct foreign interference in the Rose Revolution appears to have spread through foreign newspapers such as the *Wall Street Journal* (24 November 2003) and mostly unsubstantiated internet

sources. The most serious defender of this point of view is Michael Barker in 'Regulating Revolutions in Eastern Europe' (Barker 2006). Barker points out that the World Bank and International Monetary Fund suspended their financial support to Georgia only to renew it after Shevardnadze had stepped down. Finally the US Department of State announced it would halve its financial aid to Georgia, which had stood at US$100 million in 2003 and which was increased again after the Rose Revolution.

In other words, it would be fair to conclude that although there was no major direct foreign interference during the three weeks in November, there had been a longer term financial influence through conditional grants and aid for development. Obviously, giving advice to NGO leaders and later to opposition was part of the package. For example, a donor initiative somewhat encouraging the politicization of the civil society sector was taken by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). They financed several political projects such as the 'Political School' and the 'Political Club'. Another donor initiative was taken by the Soros Open Society Foundation, encouraging an alliance between NGOs in order to increase their impact on politics and society. For example a coalition called 'The Democratic Initiative', in which seven NGOs united, was established in the form of a foundation. By the end of 2002, Alexander Lomaia was appointed executive director of the Foundation. This group later developed a well-known document called 'The Ten Steps', explained below. (Nizharadze and Companjen 2008: 94–97).

Ten Steps to Freedom

The idea of Ten Steps originated at the initiative of the Open Society. According to the proposal, the NGO sector should work out and publish a list of vital problems in Georgia and offer cooperation and support to those political forces that would recognize the problems as guideline principles. Ten points were brought to the fore, covering a wide spectrum of problems existing in Georgia: reform of the Soviet system, problems of property and landownership, restoring the territorial integrity of Georgia, withdrawal of Russian military bases, reform of the education system and media. The document was called *Kmara!*, meaning 'enough' and signed by about fourteen NGOs. Soon two political entities, the New Democrats, led by Zurab Zhvania and the National Movement, led by Mikheil Saakashvili, joined this group and adopted the document as a formal guidebook.

Soon after, from the beginning of 2003, a youth organization under the same name covered the streets in Tbilisi and other Georgian towns with *Kmara* graffiti. *Kmara* protests continued and took various forms: posters, proclamations and rallies. The goal and method remained unaltered: they claimed that people had had enough of corruption, enough of Shevardnadze, enough of no progress being made on just about every area of public policy, and they did so in a peaceful way, preferably using humour. These activities received broad coverage in the media. The simplicity of the message was understood and recognized by all. The movement was strengthened by cooperation with NGOs such as the Liberty Institute, who organized training sessions for youngsters. The Serbian Otpor organization

was looked to for ideas and for the kinds of peaceful activities that could be done. Another NGO, Alpe, also worked together with *Kmara*, especially during the months preceding the November 2003 elections.

The Media and the Church

Civil society obviously comprises more than donor organizations and local NGOs. Some even include political parties in their definition of civil society, but it is generally accepted that the media, the church, interest groups, trade unions and volunteers together make up the fabric of civil society. Georgian Orthodoxy is part of the Georgian identity and according to a poll held in 2003 the church had the highest confidence or trust with the Georgian population in comparison with other public institutions (Nizharadze 2004: 104–21) One of the first things Shevardnadze did when he came back to Georgia was to have himself christened. The Patriarch Ilia II would be present at openings of the parliament and other important governmental meetings. The church and Shevardnadze's government signed a covenant perhaps encouraged by the rapid increase of foreign sects taking root in Georgia and the Liberty Institute defending the rights of Jehovah's Witnesses. These foreigners combined their missionary work with concrete help to the poorest (clothes, books and food if necessary) but became the target of attacks inspired by a fundamentalist ex-communicated priest, Basil Mkalavishvili. The Georgian Orthodox Church, after having been discouraged and infiltrated by the KGB during communist times, needed some state support due to lack of finances and infrastructure.

As to media, a general analysis of newspapers shows that most articles of the time were about cracking down on Shevardnadze's regime rather than about praising the opposition leaders. The press coverage of Mikheil Saakashvili forms a small exception to this rule. All in all, NGO leaders were considered more relevant in terms of influence at the onset of the revolution than a political subject such as Mamaladze, the governor of Kwemo Kartli. According to a poll (Mshvidobadze 2008:196–97) the independent radio/TV station Rustavi 2 was considered as having more influence than Saakashvili, and the *Kmara* youth movement was seen as more important than the opposition politician, Nino Burjanadze. Finally, in the mass media, civil society is mainly understood in terms of NGOs, and not for example in terms of the church, or other interest groups such as Darbazi, representing a wide group of intellectuals, or the Teachers' Trade Union, which actively sought to mobilize people. (Mshvidobadze 2008:199).

The civil society activities including the media generally helped de-legitimize the Shevardnadze government (Nizharadze and Companjen 2008: 110). The slogans and actions in the street, the extensive media coverage, the mantra-like repetition that the corrupt government of Shevardnadze should end, that he had accomplished nothing and was likely to rig the elections, prepared an awareness with the general public and stimulated a mood of protest. In fact the Rustavi 2 and *Kmara* activities formed a crown on the work begun in the preceding years by the Liberty Institute, especially with regard to freedom of speech and freedom of belief,

and the Young Lawyers Association, concerning rule of law and the Fair Elections Society in relation to elections.

The civil actors involved had developed a common language and common understanding of democratic principles not well understood before then. A new Georgian elite had been educated through civil society activity. But most of all, NGOs, media, radical opposition and the *Kmara* movement prepared the public at large to hold Shevardnadze accountable for the mess Georgia was in. With the successful mass protest concerning Rustavi 2 still fresh in peoples' minds, not much was needed any more to get citizens back in the streets during November 2003.

Coming back to the beginning of this chapter describing the course of events during the Rose Revolution, it must be added that until the very end Saakashvili, Zhvania and Burjanadze did not know whether Shevardnadze would step down or not. According to one witness respondent, two scenarios were discussed between Shevardnadze and the triumvirate: 1) the results of the election would stay in force but pre-term parliamentary and presidential elections would be held in several months. 2) the results of the election would be cancelled and Shevardnadze would remain president until pre-term elections would be called (Khutsishvili 2008: 272). At some point in the discussion it was decided that Shevardnadze would step down. Then and there Burjanadze became the interim president until the elections, set for 4 January 2004.

The Election of Saakashvili in 2004

Mikheil Saakashvili was elected in January 2004 with an overwhelming majority, leaving little room for any kind of opposition, and he went straight to work. In the post-revolution euphoria he received 96 per cent of the vote. As certain NGO people pointed out, although some improvements had been made, this extremely high result did not suggest these elections were free or fair either. The system and habits around organizing elections had clearly not changed yet (Waters 2005: 21). Yet international organizations did not protest. Saakashvili increased his power constitutionally and re-introduced the function of Prime Minister for his friend and political competitor Zurab Zhvania. Nino Burjanadze remained Speaker of Parliament. Many NGO leaders were invited into parliament or into governmental functions. Those who had managed to acquire large grants, such as Ivane Merabishvili of Landowners Rights, or Giga Bokeria from the Liberty Institute, were rewarded with powerful positions (Companjen 2004: 202). Throughout 2004–6 little civil society activity went on because the most active people had been invited into government. Once in parliament, Giga Bokeria still claimed: 'we are the civil society'.

Saakashvili's focus was on restoring the territorial integrity of the country, stimulating the economy, fighting corruption and the black market, and on forging ties with the US, NATO and the EU. Regaining control of Adjara was not only important from a territorial integrity point of view, but also financially. Adjara, with the port of Batumi and the customs service on the boarder with Turkey, was relatively rich, with income generated by taxes on import and export activities.

Some of this money could now be claimed by Tbilisi to begin supplying the state budget with income. Aside from that, Saakashvili took measures to fight corruption. The black market of Ergneti in the Tskhinvali region was closed down in June 2004. A second measure was to immediately reform government and the police force, a big source of everyday corruption. The new president fired the entire force and re-hired personnel on the basis of capacity and an anti-corruption attitude, and also reduced the size of the police force. Any act of corruption would mean being fired on the spot. Customs and other personnel working at airports were subjected to the same scrutiny and rules. According to the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index, Georgia moved from number 84 out of 102 (score 2.3) in 1999, to number 67 out of 180 (score 3.9) in 2008, meaning the corruption diminished after the Rose Revolution which is good for economic development. A new international airport was built and visa restrictions for foreign visitors were softened. Roads from and to the airport were fixed, buildings were repaired, electricity was restored. Every possible measure was taken to invite and encourage foreign investors.

With practically no opposition in parliament, he and his young team of professionals tackled one problem after the other, including retrieving stolen money from the former Shevardnadze clan members. These 'visits', shown on national TV, generally had more of the character of witch-hunts than procedures run according to the rule of law. But they were very effective, with people having to choose on the spot to either return the money or face a jail sentence. Another serious problem Saakashvili tackled boldly were the thieves in law. Laws were passed making it easier for the government to arrest these people. Many of them ended in jail or fled the country, to reorganize their activities elsewhere.

The talks started by Shevardnadze's team regarding an interest in joining NATO were continued with the Secretary General of NATO, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer. First steps were taken to set up an Individual Partnership Actionplan (IPAP) with NATO in October 2004. The next step, getting a Membership Action Plan (MAP), was not generally accepted at the Bucharest summit of April 2008.

Eager to restore Georgia's territorial integrity, Saakashvili was sometimes somewhat rash towards both the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and his rival, President Putin. It was the more politically experienced Zurab Zhvania who would calm things down. Both Saakashvili and Zhvania were in touch with and invited over to Washington for advice, support and briefings. On 3 February 2005, not long after Zhvania had returned from one of these trips with an American pat on the back, he was found dead in an apartment.

In May 2005 President George W. Bush and his wife Laura visited Georgia. Bush told the crowd, 'your courage is inspiring democratic reformers and sending a message that echoes across the world: Freedom will be the future of every nation and every people on Earth … Georgia is today both sovereign and free and a beacon of liberty for this region and the world' (Berrigan 2005). The relations between the US and Georgia were strengthened. The military relations, with Georgia sending troops to Iraq, were reinforced. Bush, charmed by this hospitable and cooperative country, called Georgia 'a beacon of democracy'.

Relations with the Russian Federation

The Russian influence undoubtedly played a role during the civil war that flared up after independence. It remained present in the form of military bases in Georgia, and continued to play a role as a peacekeeping force in the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (handing out Russian passports in spite of their 'peacekeeping' role). It also had military and diplomatic influence in Adjara. There were incidents of violating airspace, of closing gas/oil supplies and introducing visas for Georgians working in Russia.

After the Rose Revolution, a timeline for closing down Russian military bases was agreed upon. When Georgia publicly expelled Russian diplomats as spies in October 2006, Russian authorities were greatly angered and their relations degenerated rapidly. The Russian ambassador was recalled, Georgian products (especially wine) were banned from the Russian market. Thousands of Georgians were deported back to Georgia on cargo flights, adding to the high unemployment rates.

Even though a Russian ambassador was appointed to Georgia again later, relations remained tense. The main unresolved issue is Georgia's territorial integrity. On the one hand, both the South Ossetian and Abkhazian parts, having been Georgian territory under Soviet Constitutional law, have remained so under international law. On the other hand, Russia, the peacekeeping party, thwarted the negotiations with South Ossetia and Abkhazia several times. The Russian Federation holds a firm grip on South Ossetia and Abkhazia by holding the peacekeeper role in those areas, still having military bases there and by handing out Russian passports in those territories.[5]

Conclusion

The Georgian state under Shevardnadze was weak, rather than authoritarian or liberal. As long as the interests of his clan were not damaged, people could basically do as they liked, especially if they had the means to pay their way. This lack of direction, the 'syndrome of non-punishment', and the great poverty was experienced as a nuisance. Even though one might expect poverty and lack of electricity to be a reason for mass protests, the occasional gatherings in the streets against the lack of electricity were of no comparison with the massive protests against the closing down of the independent TV station Rustavi 2 in 2001. The government capitulated to these popular demonstrations. This was an enormous lesson for the Young Reformists, who chose this moment to break with Shevardnadze's CUG party and join an opposition with their own political parties, the United National Movement and the New Democrats.

Civil society, virtually absent during Soviet times because the state was supposed to take care of everything, was stimulated through conditional grants by foreign organizations such as USAID and George Soros' Open Society Foundation. A new Georgian elite of mainly young intellectuals was formed. Many NGO leaders and staff members took courses in the US, in Germany, or in Hungary at the Soros-funded Central European University in Budapest. Trained and equipped

with computers, offices and foreign networks, this group formed a viable force in Georgian society. When this group of NGO leaders formed a coalition with the reformist politicians and the non-government media like Rustavi 2, this force formed a real catalyst to get people on their feet immediately after the rigged elections of November 2003. This time, not only was there enough expertise to collect proof of election fraud, but people had a collective memory of government defeat after their protests in 2001. Moreover, the media and the *Kmara* movement had prepared the mindset of people against Shevardnadze's non-functioning regime.

As to foreign influence and the Rose Revolution, we distinguished long-term enhancement of civil society from short-term actual interventions during the revolutionary weeks in November 2003. Although people from traditional Georgian and nationalistic circles and Shevardnadze himself for some time claimed that foreigners (especially The Open Society Georgia Foundation) were interfering in Georgian internal affairs, (Khutsishvili 2008: 294) and funding *Kmara*, we found no evidence to support this. There was no major direct foreign interference during the three weeks in November (outside warnings not to use force and an attempt to mediate by the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs). There had been however, a longer term financial influence through conditional grants and aid for developing a third sector more or less critical of Shevardnadze's rule. Giving advice and training to NGO leaders and later to opposition leaders was part of this package. The Open Society Georgia Foundation, for example, did play a role in bringing the NGOs together, with a programme for change and the opposition parties of Saakashvili and Zhvania. During the two years before the revolution, NGOs became increasingly politicized, with every political leader of some importance having their own reinforcements of supportive NGOs. Since these civil society leaders were invited into parliament and government functions after the Rose Revolution, not only was the civil society sector left bloodless between 2004 and 2006, but knowing how powerful this sector combined with independent TV could be, the Saakashvili regime kept a watchful and suppressing eye on NGOs and media.

His radical choice for the West has both advantages and disadvantages. Initially it encouraged change (governmental and educational reforms, modernization and less corruption on an everyday level) and Georgia was being transformed from a failed into a functioning state. In a year, more was accomplished than in the previous decade. His policy, however, also caused unnecessary tension with Russia and the breakaway regions and after August 2008, the Georgian state is weak again with even more IDPs and little state control in the regions. People are beginning to see a pattern in their recent history of independence (the ousting of Gamsakhurdia, the ousting of Shevardnadze, and after the elections of January 2008, the repeated public demand for Saakashvili to step down) of a series of 'revolutions'. The sometimes coarse methods to accomplish reforms, the weak opposition in parliament, and the identification of president Saakashvili with an enlightened autocratic leader such as Kemal Atatürk justify the paradoxical expression that under Shevardnadze, Georgia was a ('grey' or 'hybrid') democracy without democrats, whereas under Saakashvili, Georgia was led by a democratic ideal or image, without being a democracy.

Notes

1 This paragraph relies upon Companjen (2004) 'Tradition and Modernity. Rethinking Roles of NGO leaders in Georgia's transition to democracy'. PhD. VU-Amsterdam.
2 A bloc is a strategic alliance of several parties working together under a bigger umbrella in order to enlarge their chances of passing the 7 per cent threshold required to get into parliament. The Central Elections Commission registered a total of nine blocs and 13 parties contesting 235 seats in parliament.
3 *BBC News* 10 February1998; *Azerbaijan International* (6.1) Spring 1998: 'He attributed the assassination attempt to a "third force" of "international terrorism" in Russia. The highly organized attack with rocket-propelled grenades injured two body guards in his motorcar and killed another, Kakha Shevardenidze, 37, who was credited with having saved the President's life in 1995'.
4 The Liberty Institute is known to have given support and facilities to students and the *Kmara* movement.
5 In the meantime the Russian-Georgian war has taken place in August 2008 and Russia has recognized the break-away regions as independent states.

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3 Ukraine

Nathaniel Copsey

What was the Orange Revolution? Was it a 'revolution' at all? And, if so, why did a coloured revolution take place in Ukraine but not Russia or Belarus? Five years on from the dramatic events in Kiev's Maidan square in 2004, and as another presidential election in Ukraine approaches, it is worth returning to those events and asking what actually happened in the context of regime change in the post-Soviet space as a whole. At the time, Ukraine's coloured 'revolution' was, of course, hailed by many within the country and many more in the West as a decisive break with the past, with kleptocratic Kuchma-ism, with 'managed' or 'virtual' democracy (Wilson, 2005a): a sea change for the Ukrainian people that would lead them to the sunny uplands of liberal democracy, greater prosperity and swift integration into the Euro-Atlantic alliances. Some political scientists went a step further and implied that the promise of these glittering prizes could be a factor in explaining how the coloured revolution came about in the first place (Bunce and Wolchik 2006, p. 294). A significant part of Ukrainian society – the 'blue camp' that supported the defeated presidential candidate Viktor Yanukovych – and commentators from the rest of the former Soviet space, particularly Russia, were derisive about the hubristic claims of the 'orange camp' and its Western supporters, and argued that the revolution was simply a Western *coup d'état*, masterminded by the US and its allies. Neither claim was entirely valid, but it is safe to conclude that for most Ukrainians, of all political persuasions, the Orange Revolution's principal legacy was five years of disappointment, as the political elite sunk into a drawn-out feud punctuated by parliamentary elections that produced perpetual instability and inertia. When tectonic political shifts take place, through popular protest, the ballot box, by violent means – or indeed a mixture of these – disappointment always follows, which of course is only to be expected when there is so great a weight of public expectation.

The aim of this chapter within this comparative volume is to revisit the Orange Revolution as an example of a 'successful' (Bunce and Wolchik 2006: 284) colour revolution, and to attempt to explain why events unfolded as they did by focusing in turn on different sections of Ukrainian society. By 'successful' colour revolution, I simply refer to the removal from power of an illiberal or authoritarian leadership through non-violent and/or democratic means (i.e. through the defeat of the incumbents at the ballot box combined with non-violent mass protest). 'Success'

for the purposes of this chapter explicitly does not refer to the effectiveness of the post-revolutionary government or imply the achievement of a fully consolidated political system (on consolidated democracies, see Linz and Stepan 1996).

Why coloured revolutions were successful in removing the incumbent leadership within some post-Soviet states but not others is this volume's essential research question. Numerous scholars have investigated this matter, including, for example, Bunce and Wolchik (2006), who argued that the coloured revolutions between the mid-1990s and mid-2000s came about as the result of the international diffusion of revolutionary ideas and the methods needed to bring such a revolution about across the Central and East European region. Very briefly, the conditions for the export of coloured revolution can be summarized as: the 'persuasive power of success' (i.e. the encouragement for would-be revolutionaries provided by the fact that such revolutions had happened elsewhere); the consequences of the revolution (especially where states had gone on to join the European Union, most notably Romania, Bulgaria and Slovakia); and, of undoubtedly the greatest importance, 'contexts where there were political opportunities for change' (Bunce and Wolchik 2006: 294). As aspiring would-be political leaders are taught, politics is always local, and local conditions were emphasized by Polese (2009) who argues that the crucial factor in the Orange Revolution was the transformation of informal social networks into formalized civil society groupings/ NGOs that in turn mobilized the popular support and public protest that helped to prevent electoral fraud during the 2004 Ukrainian presidential elections. Yet, of course, the outcome of the Orange Revolution cannot be explained through a description and analysis of the role of NGOs alone.

In keeping with the basic premise shared by Ó Beacháin and Polese (this volume) as well as Bunce and Wolchik (2006), the focus of this chapter is on the particularities of the Ukrainian case that help to explain why a coloured revolution took place in Ukraine, but not, for example, Russia or Belarus – the two eastern Slav states that could be described as most similar to Ukraine in terms of historical development and societal make-up. Thus this chapter investigates the different roles played by various political actors and segments of Ukrainian society in the run-up to, and during, the Orange Revolution. Its line of argument proceeds in five sections. Section I begins with the attitudes of the elite and explores how a 'revolution' could be allowed to occur in a society where, as Viktor Chudowsky and Taras Kuzio argued a year before the contested elections in 2003, 'passivity is the essential characteristic of the Ukrainian "public" as a whole' (Chudowsky and Kuzio 2003: 275). Section II turns to the opposition and asks whether it could be regarded as a unified whole or not and what the significance of this was. Section III examines the role played by external actors: Russia, the European Union and in particular its new Member States, and the US. Section IV investigates the role played by civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and section V looks at the population's attitude to the revolution by drawing on the fascinating public opinion data that has been recently collected and analyzed by White and McAllister (2009).

The Elite

In common with many other post-Soviet republics, during the course of the 1990s, Ukrainian politics came to be dominated by a small elite, a circle of billionaire businessmen gathered around the president of Ukraine, popularly termed oligarchs. They had 'made' or rather extracted their riches from Ukraine during the first years of the transition, largely in the commodities markets, particularly the gas industry (more generally, see Aslund and McFaul, 2006: 9–28). Then, as perhaps is still in the case in 2009, it was impossible to distinguish between big business and how its interests were represented and party politics as a whole. Oligarchs had effectively captured the state and it served the interests of this very narrow group over all others. Yet to imply that the political and business elite was homogenous and united in its opposition to political change, and therefore the Orange Revolution, is very misleading. Neither before nor since the Orange Revolution has the Ukrainian elite been particularly compact or monolithic in its nature (Ó Beacháin and Polese, this volume). Splits are not simply apparent between, say, different political parties, but within political parties themselves, even those such as the Party of Regions that are widely believed to represent the interests of industrialists within one region (Copsey and Shapovalova 2008).

These divisions within the Ukrainian elite were partly the result of a change in the Ukrainian business environment in the 1990s (Aslund and McFaul 2006: 23–25). As a result of the economic reforms introduced during Viktor Yushchenko's premiership at the turn of the twenty-first century, the opportunities for rent-seeking and skimming from the sale of gas or other commodities by holding regional monopolies over the sale of those commodities had evaporated. By the time of the Orange Revolution, wealth was largely being generated for this group of billionaires through production, particularly of steel in the eastern regions of Ukraine. The oligarchs became engaged in even fiercer competition between each other, and thus could not unite around one candidate.

A key point that is worth noting here, that adds further grist to Ó Beacháin and Polese's mill (Introduction, this volume), is that it is hard to make a clear division in Ukraine between who was the 'opposition' in 2004 and who was the 'ruling elite'. All of the main Orange revolutionaries had served in high office during the Kuchma administration, including Viktor Yushchenko (as prime minister), Yulia Tymoshenko (as deputy prime minister), Borys Tarasyuk (as foreign minister) and so on. Tymoshenko is believed to have made her wealth in the gas industry in the 1990s and went into opposition to the regime when her former business partner and ally Pavlo Lazarenko (Ukraine's most corrupt politician) fled the country in 1999. The men and women who broke the power of the Kuchma regime were not political outsiders like the leaders of Poland's Solidarity movement in the 1980s; they were to a greater or lesser extent, creatures of the old regime as well. When they fell out of favour with President Kuchma, or when they felt that the distribution of political power no longer suited them, they formed into opposition groups that very gradually drew together in the run-up to the 2004 presidential elections.

Although President Kuchma had proven himself skillful in playing the oligarchs

off against one another in his second term as president (1999–2004) and had consolidated authority in the presidency, he was far from all-powerful (see Wilson 2005b: 25–5); Karatnycky 2006: 29–44). His power lay in acting as the arbiter of disputes between the oligarchs (a vital role in a state without the proper rule of law). His ultimate interest was in staying in power (and he obtained a decision from the Ukrainian constitutional court that would have allowed him a third term on the grounds that the first term was served under a different constitution), and if this could not be achieved given his single-digit poll ratings since the 'Gongadzegate' scandal of 2000, then at all costs he wished to avoid prosecution out of office. President Kuchma's relative weakness was also apparent in his control of the media, which was very incomplete, and in essence amounted to control of state television channels – leaving ample room for opposition in the print media, private broadcast media and, of course, the internet (Prytula 103–22). Perhaps the ultimate proof of just how weak Kuchma was may be found in his bungled strategy for exiting the presidency. Kuchma did not rule out running for the presidency until 2004 (which is why he needed a constitutional court ruling that would allow him to run). Once he did decide not to run himself, of the two main contenders for the presidency, it is clear that he favoured Yanukovych over Yushchenko, but his support was not entirely wholehearted; as usual he hedged his bets to an extent that was not immediately apparent to the external observer at the time of the elections. His ideal outcome for the second round of the presidential elections would have been for them to be declared void so that he could remain in office for longer. Yet once protests began, his situation became more desperate and the aim shifted to avoiding the 'Romanian scenario' (Wilson 2005b): that his presidency would end in a summary execution.

The effect of all these numerous divisions within the elite, or elites more accurately, was to water down quite significantly the many benefits that Kuchma and Yanukovych enjoyed as the incumbent president and prime minister respectively. Had the business elite been united in its support for Yanukovych from the very outset, it would have been far harder for the Orange Revolutionaries to seize the initiative. Crucially, they were divided, some defected to Yushchenko's camp before the election (such as Petro Poronshenko, see Aslund and McFaul, 2006: 19) and others when it became clear that an Orange victory was the more likely outcome.

The Opposition

By contrast, Ukraine's opposition on the eve of the elections was united (see Karatnytcky 2006: 29–44). The existence of a unified opposition had been many years in the making. One of the reasons why Kuchma and the oligarchs had been able to gather so much power around themselves in the 1990s was the absence of a broad-based opposition. As had been the case elsewhere in the Soviet Union, during the late 1980s a number of civic organizations had grown up across Ukraine, most notably Rukh (The People's Movement of Ukraine), but they were not able to transform themselves into cohesive political parties, partly due to a lack of funding (which was not forthcoming from their impoverished supporters) and partly due

to their failure to mobilize effectively between election campaigns. Opposition to the president and the government tended to be co-opted into the political establishment in the 1990s under Kravchuk and Kuchma. Thus it is worth reiterating: the opposition that emerged and beat Viktor Yanukovych in 2004 overwhelmingly comprised individuals who had once worked for President Kuchma.

According to Karatnytcky (2006: 29–32), a broad-based opposition emerged in Ukraine by 2002 or 2004 as a result of three factors. First, the constitution of 1996 made it clear that ultimate responsibility for what was happening in Ukraine lay with the President. Second, insider privatization of large-scale enterprises and increased macroeconomic stability led to the emergence of oligarchs independent of the President, who were keen to compete for political power and the competitive advantage in the marketplace that it brought. Some of these oligarchs emerged as challengers to the presidential authority. The downfall of Pavlo Lazarenko in 1999 was a watershed that sent Yulia Tymoshenko into open opposition to the old regime. The third and most significant factor was 'Gongadzegate' or 'Kuchmagate', which fatally undermined President Kuchma's credibility and which at one point threatened to eject him from power entirely. The effect of the Kuchmagate scandal was to unite a host of groups, including political parties (such as Tymoshenko's then Batkivshchyna and Moroz's Socialists) and civic groups, such as the Pora youth movement, under one banner: the 'Ukraine without Kuchma' campaign, which called for the President's impeachment. The opposition did not topple Kuchma and the state fought back successfully, harassing its financial backers (using the tax police) and briefly imprisoning Yulia Tymoshenko (on charges of forging customs documents). The Communist Party also retained a large measure of support at this time, which was also a factor in the failure of the opposition.

As prime minister of Ukraine, Viktor Yushchenko had remained neutral during the 'Ukraine without Kuchma' campaign of 2000–01. His dismissal in 2001 and the subsequent harassment of his Our Ukraine party pushed him towards Yulia Tymoshenko and the more radical opposition. By the 2002 parliamentary elections, opposition parties were strong enough to win half the seats.

The opposition benefited from a number of advantages during the 2004 presidential election campaign, largely as a result of the negligence, arrogance or outright stupidity of the old regime. First, the coverage of Yushchenko's campaign on state-controlled television was so biased and overly critical that the reportage was simply not credible. At this time, state media received so-called 'temnyky' or instructions from the Presidential Administration (or rather sources unknown) that would indicate how the news was to be covered. Second, the Yanukovych campaign was lacklustre and Soviet in style (including factory visits, a visit from the Russian President, redolent of the 'General Secretary' visiting in pre-1991 elections, and emphasizing Yanukovych's official functions as the incumbent). Third, the opposition focused on the corruption of the old regime and the insider privatizations and offered a programme that appealed to the hopes of the electorate that things could be different. Fourth, the Yushchenko campaign had no choice but to ally with civic groups and fight an election at the grass-roots level since its

access to national media outlets, especially state television was both limited and unlikely to convey the desired election message.

Such were the factors that served the opposition during the earlier part of the campaign. In the later stages of the campaign, the poisoning of Yushchenko convinced the opposition that they had to mount an all-out campaign and that the election would be about political survival as much as winning political power. The final fillip that convinced the opposition that victory was within reach was the fact that Yushchenko topped the poll in the first round of the elections, from that point onwards, the sense of momentum was became overpowering, although of course the odds still appeared to be stacked against the opposition.

As a result of Kuchma having alienated a part of the political elite from 1999 onwards and the Kuchmagate scandal of 2000 that brought together disillusioned functionaries of the old regime and civic groups, the coalition of forces that faced Viktor Yanukovych in 2004 was considerable. It comprised the People's Power Coalition of Yulia Tymoshenko and Viktor Yushchenko, the Party of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, the Socialist Party and civic groups, and had sufficient financial resources to mount a serious campaign. Yushchenko also had the backing of the West, whose media portrayed him and his orange camp in a very favourable light. He did not, of course, benefit from the support of Ukraine's powerful neighbour to the North, Russia, and it is to the role of the Russian Federation in the 2004 election campaign that this chapter now turns.

External Actors

The role of external actors in the Orange Revolution is frequently overestimated. In part this is because in both Russia and the West, the election campaign was interpreted in foreign policy terms, with Ukraine deciding – once and for all – whether it would integrate more closely with Russia or with the European Union and NATO. In fact, Ukrainian voters tended to make their decisions based on domestic policy issues, after all politics is always local. International politics and foreign policy were not of prime concern to the opposing Ukrainian political forces that contested the election.

Yet it is undeniable that external actors played a role in the election, and an overt role at that. First, for all the protestations of neutrality, there was a strong sense that Yushchenko was the favoured candidate of the West. Second, as Polese (2008) has argued, the support of the West was clear in training civil society movements that were exclusively in opposition to the regime in knowledge transfer, experience sharing and networking (Polese 2008: 1). Russia did not trouble to hide its preference: it was for Viktor Yanukovych, pure and simple (which in turn was a part of its usual strategy of supporting the incumbent governing elite and undermining the opposition, see Polese 2008: 18). This section reviews the role of international actors to determine their contribution to the eventual outcome of the election campaign.

Russia

For Russia, the Ukrainian presidential election was of explicitly geopolitical and strategic importance (on Russia, see Petrov and Ryabov 2006: 145–62). The aim of the Putin and Medvedev presidencies over the first decade of the twenty-first century was to increase Russia's influence over the former Soviet Union as a means of boosting its relative standing in the world vis-à-vis the other the would-be superpowers: China, the US, India and the EU. It is a well-known aphorism that with Ukraine, Russia becomes an empire, and moreover that the origins of the Russian empire lie to a great extent in the conquest and colonization of Ukraine and its victory over Poland-Lithuania for influence in that region. Ukraine's participation in the Single Economic Space (SES), an economic union of former Soviet republics, was also felt to be essential to the relaunch of Russia as a regional hegemon. Thus Ukraine was a crucial test of Russia's foreign policy and its ability to exercise decisive influence over its former empire. As such the outcome of the presidential elections in Ukraine was a near-unmitigated disaster.

That Russia failed to achieve the result that it wanted was the result of clumsiness and a failure to take into account the national specificities of the Ukrainian political situation. In the eyes of the Kremlin (Petrov and Ryabov 2006: 148–51), the Ukrainian electorate would behave like their Russian neighbours and in consequence, the strategies deployed by the Russian authorities to secure the right outcome in elections could simply be applied without modification in the Ukrainian context. In short, the Kremlin picked its man, Viktor Yanukovych, following consultation with President Kuchma (at this time the Russian authorities had no inkling that Kuchma's support for Yanukovych was not wholehearted), and advised the Yanukovych campaign to put into play the tactics that had brought success in Russian elections.

So what did the Russian authorities actually provide? Their support came in the form of political advisers, the famed political technologists, such as Gleb Pavlovsky (although bizarrely his firm never had an official contract, a point he bemoaned himself), whose role was to provide tactical and campaign advice to the Yanukovych camp (see Petrov and Ryabov, 2006: 151–55). This advice was to make full use of the state's resources: the media (which should focus overwhelmingly on Yanukovych and blacken the image of Yushchenko in the crudest fashion); to maximize voter turnout in 'loyalist' regions of Ukraine; to employ vote-rigging techniques such as carousel voting (voting more than once) and the use of 'dead souls' (taking advantage of the fact that electoral rolls had not been updated to remove dead citizens – and using their votes); to apply the usual pressures to those who were dependent on the state to induce them to vote for Yanukovych; and to replace suspect bureaucrats in wavering provinces with officials who could be trusted to deliver the right result.

Some funding was supplied directly to the Yanukovych campaign from Russia, although probably nothing like as much as was reported in the Western media, where figures of US$600 million were bandied about. It is unlikely that direct support from Russian businesses amounted to anything like this sum, but it is highly

likely that tens of millions of dollars did find their way into the Yanukovych election fund. The Russian state also agreed on a series of highly favourable economic concessions to Ukraine in the run up to the election: it reduced the gas debt from US$2.2 billion to US$1.4 billion (see Petrov and Ryabov, 2006:150) and abolished quotas for Ukrainian steel pipes. These measures came on top of the heavily subsidized energy that it already supplied to Ukraine. Indeed all this 'aid' from Russia to Ukraine in the 1990s and beyond amounted to far more than the country ever received from international donors. Yet these measures were not necessarily felt by ordinary voters, but perhaps this was not the intention and the aim was to buy the loyalty of the oligarchs, such as Viktor Pinchuk, who controlled much of the production of Ukrainian steel pipes.

Support also came from the Russian media, especially television – which was viewed by many eastern and southern Ukrainian voters – which broadcast a solidly pro-Yanukovych message (Copsey 2005). Yet the centrepiece of Russian intervention in the campaign was the visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin, not long before the first round of voting. Putin was hugely popular in Ukraine at the time. Yet Yanukovych still came second in the first round.

Russia 'lost' Ukraine because it failed to contemplate the possibility of a Yushchenko victory or the possibility of a change of strategy following the first round. By insisting on simply 'more of the same' in campaigning for the second round, the Kremlin lost the chance to switch its support to Yushchenko or step gracefully aside from the fray. The Kremlin was simply too shocked by the protests that followed the fraudulent second round to respond adequately. That Putin congratulated Yanukovych three times on his victory in the fraudluent second round showed how out of touch he and his advisers were with the situation in Kiev.

The 'West'

Both the US and the EU (on Western influences, see Sushko and Prystayko 2006: 125–44), which together can be taken to represent the 'West', had a common interest in Ukraine's presidential elections in 2004 as well as the events of the Orange Revolution that followed. Certainly the Atlantic allies shared a common goal vis-à-vis Ukraine: the promotion of democracy and the election. How they proceeded with the promotion of this overarching goal reflected the division of labour between the two powers. The US was more rigorous and vocal, initially at least. The EU's approach was more nuanced and longer term, reflecting not only the variety of opinions of its Member States but also its preference for steady institution building, sustained over many years.

The principal contribution of the West came in monitoring the election campaign, mostly under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Development (OSCE). The mission sent by the OSCE was acknowledged as neutral and disinterested, which meant that its findings were treated seriously and the OSCE did not hesitate to condemn the conduct of the election in the strongest way (Copsey 2005). Without this condemnation, it would have been far harder to mobilize protestors following the close of the (first) second round of the election. It is also

very unlikely that the US and the EU would have rejected the election results without the OSCE report.

The United States

Beginning with the US, it was clear that the election of 2004 was viewed as a test of the strength of democracy in the region, in the face of an unexpressed concern about Russian expansion. The US government and its Ambassador to Ukraine, John E. Herbst, made it clear that what mattered was the election's 'honesty and transparency' (Sushko and Prystyko, 2006: 132). Both Congress and Government were swift to criticize the flagrant violations of the electoral process and President George W. Bush made it clear in a letter presented to President Kuchma ahead of the second round of the elections by Senator Richard G. Lugar, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, that Kuchma was to be held responsible for a free and fair election. The US was equally blunt in its pledge to review relations with Ukraine if the elections were judged to be 'tarnished' (Sushko and Prystyko 2006: 133).

The European Union

As has remained the case until the present, the EU can be split into two camps when it comes to policy towards Ukraine (Copsey 2008). One the one hand, there is the Russia-first group, comprised in the main of older Member States from Western Europe, with France, Italy and to an extent Germany forming the vanguard of this group. They are sceptical about the 'European vocation' of Ukraine and very careful to avoid undertaking any activity that would be seen as offensive to Russia. At the same time, however, they are of course in favour of greater democratic progress in Ukraine.

The second group of EU Member States is composed primarily of the newer Member States, in particular, Poland and Lithuania, but also Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia and Romania. The UK and Sweden could also be added to this cluster, for different reasons: the UK is pro-enlargement because it hopes this will dilute the federal nature of the Union and Sweden is both mildly suspicious of Russia and genuinely anxious to improve the quality of Ukrainian citizens' lives through greater democracy. This grouping to a varying degree (although led by Poland) increasingly sees the potential for renewed Russian imperialism in Eastern Europe. It sees Ukraine in geopolitical and historical terms as a battleground, where competing worldviews clash.

Prior to the elections, the EU had not offered Ukraine a membership perspective and despite calls to do so after the revolution (for example, from the European Parliament), it did not do so then either – although it did improve the quality of bilateral relations with Ukraine and marginally increase what it is prepared to offer Ukraine immediately in the shape of development assistance and trade liberalization by bolstering the Action Plan it had already agreed with the Kuchma/Yanukovych government prior to the elections. What the EU did offer that made

the Orange Revolution possible was mediation between the various actors, particularly on the part of the then Presidents of Lithuania and Poland, Valdas Adamkus and Aleksander Kwaśniewski, respectively. Kwaśniewski in particular brought a detailed knowledge of Ukraine and its politics with him to the negotiating table, which was crucial in paving the way for a deal to be brokered by the triumvirate of Solana, Kwaśniewski and Adamkus on behalf of the EU. The deal cleared the way for the repeat second round of the elections. Russia, as the preceding section showed, was too discredited to play much of a role as a mediator.

Civil Society and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

In common with the birth of the political opposition to Kuchma, civil society in Ukraine was a long time in the making, but it received a great fillip from the Kuchmagate scandal of 2000 (on civil society and NGOs, see Diuk 2006: 69–84; Demes and Forbirg 2006: 85–102). Of particular importance were younger Ukrainians, who had grown up in the 1990s, with no direct experience of Soviet-era oppression of political opposition. This segment of society was not afraid to challenge the regime, although it did not organize and mobilize effectively until after the parliamentary elections of 2002.

The elections, with their widespread falsifications and malpractices, acted as a recruiting sergeant for anti-Kuchma youth movements such as Pora ('It is Time'), Chysta Ukraina ('A Clean Ukraine') and Znayu ('I Know'), and brought together a very wide range of individuals who felt that Kuchma had overstepped the limits of what was acceptable in a political leader. The violence, intimidation and blatant disregard for democratic process that marked the 'dry run' elections for the mayor of Mukachevo in March 2004 radicalized the youth movements further when it became clear that only direct action could prevent the falsification and stealing of the autumn presidential elections. This direct action would primarily take the form of monitoring (in addition to the international community) the election campaign as well as organizing protests against fraud and intimidation. Youth movements were originally intended to be non-partisan but they became increasingly associated with the Yushchenko ticket as the campaign progressed, since he seemed to offer a better chance of democracy than Yanukovych (who, after all, was responsible directly and indirectly for much of the electoral fraud that precipitated the Orange Revolution).

Much has been written about the civil society activists, in particular, Pora, and their alleged links to Western governments. There does not appear to be much evidence to support the notion that youth movements were sponsored overwhelmingly by Western, anti-Russian governments. In truth, they appear to be rather domestic in nature, Demes and Forbrig (2006: 97) estimate that only US$130,000 out of a total of US$1.56 million in Pora came from donors outside Ukraine), albeit drawing lessons from similar movements in Georgia and Serbia. Youth movements acted as a vanguard for the mobilization of Kiev (and the central and west Ukrainian population) in the first hours of the revolution.

Public Opinion

Public opinion about the nature of the Orange Revolution was split at the time of the events and has remained so since then, as studies that ask voters to reflect on what the events were and what they meant have consistently shown. Of course, there is no denying that the Orange Revolution was popular. On 26 November 2004, the *New York Times* estimated that around 500,000 people were protesting in Kiev. A staggering 18.4 per cent of Ukrainians claimed to have taken part in the revolution across Ukraine (Wilson 2005b: 127): quite something in a country of some 46 million people. Let us be clear: it was the popular protests that made the revolution and forced Kuchma to take action. Without protest, it is possible that the falsified initial result for the second round play-off would simply have been accepted domestically by the population, albeit with misgivings. The scale of the protests also meant that action by the security forces to remove protestors was simply impossible. A few hundred or a few thousand protestors can be ignored or moved along, with coercion if necessary. Half a million protestors cannot be moved and their demands must be taken seriously – unless the situation is to turn very ugly.

Why Did Ukrainians Become Willing to Protest?

Ukrainians did not simply switch from Soviet-style passivity to empowerment from one day to the next. Discontent with the old regime had been mounting for several years before the revolution of 2004. The long Kuchmagate crisis, which focused on whether the president of Ukraine had been implicated in the murder of journalist Georgiy Gongadze, severely undermined the credibility of the regime. Corruption is, of course, undesirable but the notion that the President of Ukraine should potentially have given orders for a critical journalist to be killed was too much for many to bear. In 2002, the opposition to the President unexpectedly won half the seats in Verkhovna Rada elections. Cracks in the system were beginning to appear.

One factor behind the shift in public willingness to protest and an increasing sense that change was possible may lie in the argument put forward by Tocqueville in his analysis of the causes of the French revolution of 1789: the dramatic increase in prosperity in the run up the revolution (1955 [1856]). Between 2000 and 2004, Ukrainian GDP was rising at a sharp pace. After the sharp contraction of the early 1990s and the decline that followed the Russian crisis of 1998, the economy expanded at 5.9 per cent in 2000, 9.2 per cent in 2001, 5.2 per cent in 2002, 9.4 per cent in 2003 and a huge 12.1 per cent in 2004 – no doubt aided by a marked pre-election boost in public spending that year (see Copsey 2005). In short, Ukrainians were becoming better off, and if not necessarily reaching even central European levels of income, many were at least being lifted out of severe poverty. In short, change for the better at least looked possible. Moreover, during these heady years of rising prosperity, the upper middle classes of Ukraine were swelling in numbers, particularly in Kiev, which of course was the centre of the protests. Ukraine's business people also sought a say in how their country was run, and a more equal

playing field on which their businesses could compete more fairly: a revolt of the millionaires against the billionaires. The author's own experiences in 2004 of how the thousands of extra election monitors were funded suggests that Kiev's business people, lawyers and professional people were willing to dip into their own pockets to ensure a fair repeat of the second round of the election.

As Kuzio argues (2006: 45), 'Ukraine's ruling elite had been living in a world separate from society', where they seldom needed to interact with ordinary people, and where elections could be manipulated. The public was, however, well aware of the manipulation and increasingly intolerant of it. In 2002, only 20 per cent of Ukrainians trusted the authorities to hold a free and fair election, with 58 per cent expressing the view that the government could not be trusted to follow democratic procedures. The Mukachevo mayoral elections in the spring of 2004 were a 'dry-run' for what was to be expected in the presidential campaign, where the state tested out its machinery for manipulating results before putting it to use in October. The blatant violations of voting procedures also tested the waters for what the public was likely to accept and not to accept. Kuzio (2006: 46) argues that the explanation for the shift in public opinion can be found in three factors: the poisoning of Yushchenko; the narrow victory of Yushchenko in round one, which produced the impression that he was capable of victory; and the increasing discontentment with Yanukovych as a possible president. Thus by the time of the election, some 84 per cent of Ukrainians voiced their belief that they had the right to protest.

The Revolution Begins

Protests to follow the announcement of the initial result from the second round play off between Yushchenko and Yanukovych were orchestrated in advance of the second round election result, just as the fraud in the election result had been well planned in advance (Wilson 2005b: 122). Plans were made at first for a post-election rally in Maidan square, which is why the stage from which the Orange Revolution leaders spoke to Ukraine and the world was already in place. Twenty-five tents were also erected in the square, one for each of the regions. Yet there was no 'tent city' in place and Yushchenko's supporters were expecting perhaps 40,000 protestors to turn out (the same number that had rallied in support of Yushchenko on 16 October 2004) (Wilson 2005b: 122). What took everyone by surprise was how many Kyivites turned out on the morning of Monday 22 November 2004, the day after polling, armed with leaflets printed and distributed by the 'Democratic Initiatives' foundation, announcing that Yushchenko had won – on the basis of its exit poll. By mid-morning 200,000 to 300,000 had arrived. It was at this point that the eyes of the international media turned towards Ukraine. That the protests were sustained was what forced the hand of the authorities and turned the elections into a revolution.

In 2004, what was happening in the Maidan certainly appeared to be a revolution or at the very least a quite remarkable event in the history of Ukraine, and it certainly raised the hopes and expectations of those Ukrainians who supported Yushchenko to a high level. But what did Ukrainians believe about the nature of

Table 2.1 What was the Orange Revolution (% of respondents)

	2005	*2007*
A coup d'etat carried out with the support of the West	24	29
A coup d'etat prepared by the political opposition	12	15
A spontaneous popular protest	12	18
A conscious struggle of citizens united in a struggle to protect their rights	33	27
Don't know/no answer	19	11

Source: White and McAllister (2009).

the events that followed the disputed second round of the Orange Revolution five years later?

Public Opinion Five Years On

This section draws heavily on the fascinating qualitative and quantitative study carried out in Ukraine from 2006–7 by White and McAllister, which investigated the public's attitude towards the Orange Revolution three years after it had taken place. Using both opinion polls and focus groups, they found that opinion about the nature of the change had barely shifted since 2004 and that the country remained divided along the same largely geographical lines that it had been at the time of the revolution. Table 2.1 summarizes the principal findings.

What is striking about these results is that the country remains almost equally divided on the question, with 36–44 per cent (2005, 2007) of respondents believing that the revolution was a cynical manipulation of the public and 45 per cent (2005, 2007) believing that the revolution was in earnest and represented a sort of popular uprising against tyranny. As the authors point out, these all-Ukraine results have serious limitations in a society that is as divided as Ukrainian society is. When the authors broke the results down into age, gender, education level, cultural identity (Russian or Ukrainian), family income and region, they found that two factors determine whether someone was likely to support the idea that the revolution was a 'pro-Western' coup or not: place of residence and age. Older people were far less likely to have taken part in the events of 2004 and viewed their significance with cynicism. Beyond that Ukrainians were divided along the line of centre/west vs south/east, which remains the principal determinant of how Ukrainians vote.

Conclusions

What then was the Orange 'Revolution'? Why did it happen in Ukraine and not, for example, Russia or Belarus? The latter question will hopefully be addressed by the other contributions to this volume, but as the preceding chapter has shown,

it was the combination of a number of factors that made the rather extraordinary events in Maidan square in 2004 possible. As to the question of whether it was a revolution or not, five years on, the balance would appear to suggest that the Orange Revolution was, in truth, just the non-violent transfer of power from an unpopular government to an opposition through elections. A democratic process in other words. The presidency and governments that replaced the old regime were perhaps better than the Kuchma administrations, but they did not bring a 'new dawn'. The weight of public expectations vested in the Yushchenko presidency by a large chunk of Ukrainian society in 2005 was so great that it is scant surprise that his administration proved a great disappointment. It is far less of a burden to be brought to office by the ballot box (which in truth is what happened) than at the head of a 'revolution', which is how the Orange victory in 2005 was spun at the time. As the segment of this chapter that dealt with the opposition has shown, it was too much of the old regime itself to bring true change. The Orange 'Revolution' essentially replaced one part of the Ukrainian post-Soviet elite with another.

A point that is worth underscoring is that the events of 2004, whilst they captured the attention of the world's media (at least until the horrific tsunami in the Indian Ocean on 26 December), were primarily domestic in nature. External observers may read the elections as a contest between Russia and the West for control of a territory in Europe that geostrategists regard as of profound importance. In this version, the Euro-Atlantic allies 'won' and Russia 'lost'. It is certain that Russia lost much face over the elections of 2004 and certainly there were many senior figures in the Russian administration who saw the Ukrainian presidential elections as a conflict with the West, rather like Vietnam or Afghanistan had been for the Soviet Union and the US during the cold war. Yet this contestation was largely irrelevant to explaining how the Orange 'Revolution' became possible or why it happened. It was the convergence of interests between a disparate opposition and civil society NGOs that mobilized the people of Ukraine. The characteristic that made the events in the Maidan most akin to a revolution was the presence of literally hundreds of thousands – in total millions – of demonstrators. Where the West played a role in the revolution was in supplying the evidence of wrong-doing that the Ukrainian NGOs and protestors needed: through the OSCE's monitoring mission. What forced the hand of the old regime and ushered in a not-so-new regime was the will of the Ukrainian people to cast their vote in a free and transparent election, and their desire to live in a better-governed society.

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4 Kyrgyzstan

David Lewis

Introduction

The overthrow of President Askar Akaev in Kyrgyzstan in March 2005 was not widely predicted, and it did not lead to the kind of democratic transformation of the political system that some of its supporters expected. The essential mechanisms of Kyrgyz politics – informal networks of influence, based on personal and economic motivation, and shaped by kinship and regional affiliation – proved remarkably resilient, despite the changes in personnel at the top of the political pyramid. The consolidation of a semi-authoritarian system of government under President Kurmanbek Bakiev after 2005 led to disillusionment among some supporters of democracy promotion in Central Asia (Olcott 2007). Early characterizations of the 'revolution' as ushering in a new era of political pluralism have been largely forgotten. Sceptics have dismissed the events of March 2005 as little more than a coup d'etat (Knyazev 2005), or an event orchestrated by external forces, primarily the US (Peters 2005).

However, these easy labels for complex political changes are insufficient to act as explanations of what really occurred, and underplay the importance of Kyrgyzstan's so-called 'Tulip Revolution'. In reality, the events in Kyrgyzstan were deeply rooted in domestic politics and reflected widespread discontent, not only in the political elite but in wider society. Although they took place in an enabling international environment, in which the idea of radical political change had already been embedded in international and local political discourses, the main actors in the events of March 2005 were local political leaders, motivated by their own local interests and not the agendas of international NGOs or Western embassies. True, an active role was played by the US embassy in some of these political events, and several Western-funded NGOs were also involved, linked to a local civil society that was almost indistinguishable from the political opposition. However, in reality, as this chapter explores, the dynamics of political change in Kyrgyzstan were rooted much more deeply in domestic politics than in international influences. To understand what happened in Kyrgyzstan in 2005, it is more important to reflect on Kyrgyzstan's history of independence, and to analyze the political dynamics that developed in its nascent political system and ultimately gave rise to the political and social dislocations of March 2005.

The Rise of President Akaev

President Askar Akaev came to power in 1991 as a compromise candidate, somewhat distinct from the ruling clans that had dominated the Soviet-era power structures of Kyrgyzstan. As he consolidated power, so he gradually asserted the primacy of his own ruling clique over broader coalitions and personality-based groupings. Importantly, his administration was top-heavy with northerners, while southern leaders increasingly felt under-represented and sidelined from resource flows. The north-south divide was an important political and economic reality that had developed over centuries, but had been particularly emphasised by the differing impacts of Russian (and Soviet) colonial rule in the north and south. The north tended to be more russified, as a result of greater contact with an expanding Russia in the nineteenth century, and more integration into Soviet educational and political structures in the twentieth century, while the south was in general more traditional and religious. The political consequences of this north-south divide were always complex and contested; political alliances often crossed regional fractures, and there were important splits among both northern and southern elites (Ryabov 2008), but the geographic distinction nevertheless played an important role.

Under Akaev, the northern capital, Bishkek, became the centre of politics and business, and southern regions were relatively neglected. An incursion into the far south by armed militants from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) in 1999 led to some ineffective measures to develop the south, but in practice southern political leaders and business elites felt marginalized, and the population in the south experienced particularly high levels of economic dislocation. Not surprisingly, many of the strongest opposition politicians, figures such as Omurbek Tekebaev, were from the south, and there were powerful local leaders, who could mobilize support among supporters and kinship groups.

North-south divides were far from being the only fractures of political significance. By the late 1990s splits also emerged in the northern elites as Akaev attempted to consolidate his power by relying on a fairly small political base of allies, many of whom were close to the Akaev family either by kinship or by business or other links. He clashed with some powerful rival politicians in the north, notably Feliks Kulov, a russified Kyrgyz with a background in the security services, who retained considerable support in urban areas and among ethnic Russians.

Akaev did not have the kind of repressive security forces that had enabled President Islam Karimov in Uzbekistan to effectively outlaw all political opposition by 2000. Nor was he personally inclined towards that kind of authoritarian system. Indeed, he successfully promoted himself as a political liberal to Western partners; the slogan describing Kyrgyzstan as an ‘Island of Democracy’ in an otherwise authoritarian region was always a half-myth, but political life for the most part was characterized by a relative liberalism that was out of step with the atmosphere in neighbouring Uzbekistan or Kazakhstan.

Politically, however, Akaev had been consolidating power throughout the 1990s, primarily by recentralizing powers in the presidency through a series of referendums. In doing so he reduced the mandate of a parliament that was certainly

pluralistic in composition, but often chaotic in its procedures and frequently opposed to the kind of economic reforms that Akaev wished to pursue. But Akaev's campaign to be permitted to run for office again in 2000 (the opposition claimed that this would be an unconstitutional third term) galvanized opposition ahead of both parliamentary and presidential elections. However, the election campaign was marked by significant malpractice, and the opposition campaign failed to undermine Akaev's political dominance. Successful prosecutions were launched against key opposition leaders, notably Feliks Kulov and Daniyar Usenov. Kulov was jailed in 2001 on charges of abuse of power, which he claimed were politically motivated. The falsification of the 2000 elections and the imprisonment of Kulov damaged Akaev's reputation internationally, and explains some of the opposition to his regime that became common among many international NGOs and some Western diplomats after 2001. However, he was partially assisted internationally by his support for US intervention in Afghanistan, and his decision to host a coalition military base in Kyrgyzstan. But the new engagement with the West also brought with it more attention from international NGOs and international organizations, some of which were focused primarily on the failings of the regime in the areas of human rights and political development.

Aksy and the Roots of Protest

Although there had been sporadic protests in 2000 in relation to malpractice during the election, they had never threatened Akaev's political position. However, in the five years after those elections, he gradually lost support domestically in parts of the state bureaucracy, among key northern and southern elites, and in the security forces. An important role in this gradual attrition of his authority can be traced to events in the remote district of Aksy, in 2002, and several previous accounts (Olcott 2005; Lewis 2008a; Tursunkulova 2008) have noted the role of Aksy as an important forerunner of many of the events of 2005.

In early 2002 the government seemed to move towards a more authoritarian stance, perhaps believing that the new relationship with the US provided them with greater leeway in domestic affairs. The most controversial move by the government was the arrest and attempted prosecution of a parliamentary deputy, Azimbek Beknazarov, who had been leading protests against a controversial border agreement with China, under which Kyrgyzstan would cede some disputed territory to its neighbour. The government feared that Beknazarov would be able to mobilize support for his nationalist campaign against the border treaty. Most observers believed the charges against him were politically motivated, and his trial provoked mass protests by his supporters in his home region of Aksy.

On 17 March 2002, when police and officials tried to stop a crowd of demonstrators from reaching other protestors already gathered in the district centre, Kerben, several unarmed protesters were shot dead in the confrontation. The protests quickly spiralled out of control, and national political leaders seemed unable to respond adequately to the situation. A series of protest marches across the south of the country continued for several months, demanding justice for those killed;

only a last-minute deal between the government and Beknazarov prevented the demonstrators from marching on Bishkek (International Crisis Group 2002a).

The Aksy crisis demonstrated the weakness of the regime when faced with significant opposition, and most importantly demonstrated the extent to which Akaev and his close officials had lost touch with the feelings of ordinary people, especially in the south. Akaev's failure to meet and talk to the victims of the shootings or to apologize for the incident left many protestors embittered and deeply opposed to him personally. For the first time, calls for him to leave office emerged at protests (International Crisis Group 2002a). These were not national protests however. They gained little resonance in the north of the country, and even in the south, there was no great swell of support from regions outside Aksy. As with most demonstrations in Kyrgyzstan, the protests demonstrated popular support for a local politician, but there was no great national slogan or movement that could attract wider support throughout the population.

There were three important consequences of Aksy that would have a major impact in 2005. First, political activists realized how weak the state appeared when confronted by mass action. Unable to use repression, the state was also incapable of negotiating effectively with the demonstrators. Individual officials who did successfully hold talks with the protestors, such as Osh governor Naken Kasiev, were subsequently looked on with little favour by the presidential administration.

Second, the protestors tried out a range of effective protest actions that came to form the core of the tactics used by demonstrators in 2005: blocking roads, for example, was highly effective in a country with a very limited road and transport network. And the methods of mobilization were also very effective, based on existing traditional networks, with kinship playing an important role, but with significant social pressure on fellow villagers and others to join in.

Third, the Aksy events had a fatal impact on relations between the government and the police, who felt betrayed after the government tried to initiate trials against the policemen involved in Aksy, as part of their very confused response to the demonstrators' demands. Some policemen mounted protests and went out on strike to protest against what they saw as political betrayal. The police were no longer sure that if they used force against protestors they would not end up in court afterwards as part of a political deal (International Crisis Group 2002b). One final consequence of Aksy was that the then prime minister, Kurmanbek Bakiev, who claimed he had no knowledge of what led up to Aksy, was nevertheless forced to resign, creating yet another potential rival to Akaev in the future.

The Politics of Succession

There were chances for Akaev to reassert his position, and broaden his political base. A cross-party initiative to amend the constitution in early 2003 was widely welcomed, but at the end of the process, Akaev and his officials simply implemented their own desired changes and arranged a quick referendum that wrong-footed the opposition and left many feeling despondent. But the possibility of protest remained very much alive, particularly in the south. When the authorities

deregistered Usen Sydykov as a candidate, in a by-election in Kara-Kulja in the south, after apparently winning a majority of votes in the first round of voting, his supporters mounted protest marches, stormed the local government office and took the governor hostage (International Crisis Group 2004: 21–22). Such protests in isolation were not threatening for the government at a national level, but with parliamentary and presidential elections approaching, they took no measures to ensure that they would be able to contain similar protests in multiple constituencies.

One consistent factor in the post-Soviet 'colour revolutions' has been an outgoing president seeking to develop a succession strategy (Hale 2006). In Kyrgyzstan the search for an acceptable strategy dominated all other aspects of political life, and informed all the short-term tactics used by the presidential administration. By late 2004, Akaev was under tremendous pressure to devise an acceptable succession strategy that would reengage with disaffected elites and restore confidence in him as a political leader, both domestically and internationally. According to the constitution, Akaev had to stand down at the presidential election due in October 2005, and he eventually made a public statement, under strong US pressure, that he would not stand for election again. However, few believed that he would simply leave politics, and he had not indicated whether he had a favoured successor. In reality, it was widely believed that he would develop some constitutional innovation under which the presidential family would retain control over both political and economic affairs, most likely by changing the political system to allow either Akaev himself or his daughter to become prime minister in a new political system.

Importantly, this succession struggle did not simply pit Akaev against the traditional opposition, but it also opened up new fractures in the political elite. If Akaev were successful in dominating the elections, and forging a strategy that left the presidential family in control, the hegemony of the Akaevs over political and economic life would be extremely difficult to dislodge. This would be a significant expansion of family power, which would come at the expense of other well-placed elites, including leading business players in the north, who had hitherto supported Akaev.

The increasing visibility of Bermet Akaeva, the eldest daughter, and Aidar Akaev, the eldest son, played an important role in mobilizing opposition to Akaev both in the elite and in the broader population. Many ordinary people viewed the presidential children as benefiting unfairly from their father's position, a view fuelled by media coverage and frequent rumours. Within the elite the reasons for disenchantment with the presidential family were slightly different, but equally compelling. Several key figures in the elite claimed to feel increasingly squeezed economically by the growing influence of the presidential entourage in business; there was also discontent over the system of presidential appointments. These two views were important in meshing together elite and popular attitudes towards the presidential family.

It is easy to overlook the element of personal relations in these attitudes. Elite beliefs about Akaev were only partly informed by rational calculations about business aspirations or political inclusion. By 2005 there were a range of influential and powerful figures who had fallen out with the family, partly at least because

of perceived personal slights or damaged personal relations (International Crisis Group 2004). It seems apparent that there were many former officials who felt that they had lost influence and power in the latter days of Akaev; at least some blamed their failing careers on the rising influence of his close family members. Logically, some at least could envisage a more productive future without Akaev in charge, but while he was still in control, there was little sign of any public discontent emerging from political and business elites.

Electoral Reform

The 2005 parliamentary elections were important for several reasons. One theory suggested that Akaev might use parliament to change the constitution to establish a new political system in which he, or a member of his family, could emerge as effective head of state as prime minister, with the presidency reduced to a ceremonial role. This made it important for Akaev to ensure that loyal supporters would win two-thirds of the seats in parliament. However, to achieve this he had to ensure not only that loyal supporters would be elected, but that they would remain loyal once in parliament. Akaev had failed to establish a reliable political party as a political base in the past, and in any case party discipline was almost nonexistent within existing parliamentary fractions. Attempts to establish such ruling parties had been successful elsewhere in the former Soviet Union, however, notably in Kazakhstan, which often served as a political model for Kyrgyz officials to follow.

In 2003 Bermet Akaeva launched a new party, Alga Kyrgyzstan! (Forward Kyrgyzstan!), which was designed to fill this political void. The party was supposed to serve two purposes: one was to develop a loyal political base in the new parliament for Akaev; the second was to promote younger, business-oriented individuals who would challenge the dominance of older, Soviet-era bureaucrats, who still controlled much of the presidential administration, frustrating a younger, up-and-coming group of political actors, some of whom were close to Bermet Akaeva.

However, Alga Kyrgyzstan! turned out to be a failure, and other electoral reforms introduced by Akaev, far from consolidating his power, actually ended up mobilizing greater opposition and discontent. In the constitutional amendments introduced in 2003, there had been significant changes to the electoral system, introducing a new unicameral parliament, with a reduced number of seats (from 105 in two chambers to 75 in one chamber). Under the new system, there was no longer a party list, as there had been for 25 per cent of the seats under the old system. Instead, all 75 races would be fought as 'first-past-the-post' contests. This had significant consequences. Local authority figures – clan leaders, local businessmen and many figures with links to organized crime, became the front runners in the new election campaign. It seems that the administration believed that such figures would be easier to control in the new parliament, and would vote in parliament in favour of the government agenda. However, the system was fatally flawed, since it ensured that there were many more such powerful local figures than could be accommodated in the new legislature. As a result, there were fiercely contested contests in almost all constituencies, between rival local leaders who all had

recourse to considerable resources, not least the ability to mobilize popular protest in the case of real or perceived malpractice. In addition, there was no party list, which ensured that there was less scope for control of the results of the voting in the Central Electoral Commission (CEC). In the past, this party list vote had been relatively easy to manipulate, but the local election results were much more difficult for the CEC to control, particularly in the light of some technical improvements in the electoral code and a wide range of observers due to attend on polling day.

The Opposition

One of the reasons the government agreed to adopt this new system, which seemed to pose so many political challenges, was the possibility that the first-past-the-post system would make it very difficult for the opposition to gain more than a few seats in the new parliament; it seemed possible that the new electoral system might even split even further an already divided opposition. There were constant attempts to forge a single opposition alliance, but they often simply papered over quite apparent differences among different opposition leaders.

A certain level of formal opposition unity was achieved in September 2004, when a new grouping, the People's Movement of Kyrgyzstan (PMK), announced that former Prime Minister Kurmanbek Bakiev would be their de facto leader (RFE/RL 2004a). This was potentially a significant step forward in allying what was widely termed the 'radical opposition', with more moderate opponents of Akaev, primarily former officials who now found themselves drifting into open opposition. In October 2004 parliamentary deputies Alevtina Pronenko and Alisher Abdimomunov and former Education Minister Ishengul Boljurova joined the PMK. Another grouping emerged in December 2004, led by Roza Otunbaeva, a former foreign minister and ambassador to the US and the UK. This group, Ata-Jurt, included well-known opposition deputies from the south, Dooronbek Sadyrbaev, Adahan Madumarov, and Omurbek Tekebaev. It signed a partnership agreement with the PMK, and agreed to coordinate policy during the election campaign (RFE/RL 2004b).

However, there were significant structural fractures and personal animosities among the activists in these alliances. In any case, the names and structures of opposition groupings had little reality during the campaign, and certainly were not recognized by the vast majority of voters, who focused on individual candidates known to them from their local community. There was little evidence of real coordination or planning among the opposition, and an ad hoc approach to tactics during the campaign and its aftermath. In reality, the opposition was a fairly incoherent grouping, with almost no discussion of policy, or long-term planning. While many accepted Bakiev as a compromise leader, he had only limited direct personal support, and was largely chosen because he was seen as a possible bridge to the Akaev regime, and also because all other possible candidates were seen as too divisive or controversial.

Another group of the opposition consisted of NGO leaders and activists, who numerically were fairly small and primarily based in Bishkek. However, they did

have some networks and contacts across the country, and they sometimes played an important role in spreading news from the provinces, although often they were just as confused by what was going on as everybody else in Bishkek; such activists also had good access to international organizations, foreign journalists and diplomats.

Although the government dominated the main national television and radio channels, the opposition did have some media outlets on its side – the independent media was almost entirely opposed to Akaev, but it consisted primarily of a couple of Russian-language newspapers (*MSN* and *Respublika*) and, to a certain extent, the Kyrgyz-language *Agym*. An important voice for the opposition was Radio Free Europe's Kyrgyz-language programme, Azadlyk, which was listened to throughout the country and trusted far more than the pro-government news reporting on state television. The internet had begun to play a role, although access was limited outside Bishkek (ONI 2005).

The Election Campaign

Many candidates for the elections were local businessmen of one type or other, some of whom had also at one time served in national or regional governments or other public bodies. Although government backing was important for candidates, most also had to persuade voters to support them, primarily by providing material incentives. This kind of campaign often involved candidates promising to build bridges or renovate schools or provide other public services, but often it also included payment of money or provision of various services to key community leaders to ensure their community voted for the candidate. Very few candidates had much chance of getting elected without significant funding, running into hundreds of thousands of dollars. There was little indication of any party loyalty for any of the candidates. Bermet Akaeva's party, Alga Kyrgyzstan!, failed to achieve a full list of credible candidates; many political figures, hitherto loyal to Akaev, understood that close association with the regime was now fatal for their chances at the election.

International organizations had pushed hard for significant improvements to the voting system, including technical fixes such as transparent ballot boxes and an amended electoral code. Partly as a result of these initiatives, much more pressure was placed on the campaign, and much of the malpractice that provoked protest occurred before the actual voting day. The government campaign against opposition leaders was intense. The Central Electoral Commission disqualified several candidates on a narrow interpretation of residency requirements, which excluded several former diplomats, including Roza Otunbaeva, from participating. Other opposition candidates reported a range of obstacles to their campaigns mounted by local administrations and the security forces.

These government initiatives against the opposition were only to be expected. However, the first significant protests that broke out in the regions were not nearly so clear-cut, and in several cases involved candidates who were far from being traditional opposition politicians. One week before the election, candidates were deregistered in three constituencies: two (Ton district and Tyup district) were in

the traditionally politically quiescent Issyk-kul province, and the other was in Kochkor in Naryn province. In Tyup, Sadyr Japarov was deregistered in a contest in which a relative of the Akaev family was reportedly participating; in Ton, Aslanbek Maliev was deregistered, and in Kochkor, Akylbek Japarov (no relation to Sadyr Japarov) was deregistered in a contest against former Communist Party head Turdakun Usubaliev.

These were essentially local disputes, but they provoked widespread unrest in those constituencies. Supporters of the ousted candidates blocked roads in Ton and in Tyup, and in Kochkor they mounted a blockade of the main road from Bishkek to China, forcing dozens of trucks to wait by the roadside for several days. In a sign of things to come, there was no real response from the police; in Kochkor most state officials seemed to have fled, and all representations of state power virtually disappeared. Court appeals reinstated Sadyr Japarov in Tyup, but the decisions stood in Kochkor and Ton. The two ousted candidates eventually agreed to stand down the protests, but urged their supporters to vote against all other candidates, as was permissible on the ballot paper.

An even stranger situation was developing in the remote Talas region, which was also an area with no strong history of opposition tendencies. Ravshan Jeenbekov, a young, ambitious politician who had once been a favourite of the presidential family, and had held the key post of chairman of the state property fund, was the target of an attempted deselection. This attempt was thwarted after hundreds of his supporters surrounded the local courthouse, another tactic which was to prove very effective for candidates in the coming weeks. Jeenbekov was an unlikely opposition candidate, but he was quoted in one report as saying: 'I was one of the close circle around the Akaev family, but after what they have done to me after my participation in the elections, I will never work with them or this government again. They built me up, and then gave me over to the opposition' (International Crisis Group 2005: 4).

Jeenbekov's defection was the first of many erstwhile Akaev loyalists who gradually moved towards the opposition, and in retrospect his shift was one of the first signs of a division in the elite that would ultimately lead to Akaev's downfall. At the time, however, these localized, individual protests did not seem to cause significant concern in Bishkek, where news coverage of the events was quite limited. Ahead of the elections, overt defections to the opposition were still unusual, and most of the political elite continued to support the government at least in public. One exception was the unique figure of Jenishbek Nazaraliev, a very wealthy psychiatrist who ran a private clinic to treat drug and alcohol addiction. On 23 February he wrote an open letter to Akaev, demanding that he stand down. Although he was a lone voice, it was an important breakthrough for the opposition: the broader elite, including businessmen and cultural figures, had seldom overtly come out against Akaev, and Nazaraliev's letter provided an incentive for other figures to rethink their allegiances. The government responded to these unwelcome initiatives by trying to clamp down on the independent media, by suspending the power supply to the *MSN* printing plant, and then, on the eve of the poll, blocking the key broadcasts of Radio Liberty.

Parliamentary elections

Although they were strongly criticized at the time, the parliamentary elections in Kyrgyzstan in February 2005 were probably the most competitive in the country's history. There were outright victories in only 31 of 75 races, with all the rest going to a second round, because no candidate had achieved the required 50 per cent of the votes. There were probably fewer complaints than usual over the actual conduct of the voting, partly as a result of technical improvements, but also because of an unprecedented number of observers. The NGO Coalition 'For Democracy and Civil Society' fielded 1,735 observers, and most importantly there were observers from each candidate at most polling stations – these were some of the most effective observers, since they had a vested interest in spotting malpractice by their opponents. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) had over 175 observers, and other international NGOs also sent observation missions. The OSCE mission claimed that the election was more competitive than previous polls but did issue a report that criticized 'deregistration of candidates, interfering with independent media, vote buying and a low level of confidence in electoral and judicial institutions on the part of candidates and voters' (OSCE/ODIHR 2005).

There were some unexpected results in the first round. Bermet Akaeva failed to win in the first round against journalist Bolot Maripov in the Bishkek university constituency despite the intense pressure placed on students, who made up a large part of the electorate. In Kochkor supporters of Akylbek Japarov voted against all candidates, forcing a re-run of the election in that constituency. Only a few opposition candidates were successful in the first round; most were forced into a second round of voting due to be held in two weeks' time. However, it did not take long for accusations of malpractice to surface, which brought protestors out on to the street. On the day after polling, several thousand people protested in Aravan constituency in support of their candidate, who had not won the poll. Other protests took a little longer to develop. On 2 March there were demonstrations in Kogart constituency, in Jalal-Abad, in support of opposition candidate Jusupbek Jeenbekov. On 4 March demonstrators blocked the main Osh-Bishkek road in the Jalalabad region in support of opposition candidate Dooronbek Sadyrbaev. In Naryn, supporters of Ishenbai Kadyrbekov blocked the main road to China, to protest against his disqualification on flimsy legal grounds after the first round of voting. There were other protests against malpractice in Osh and Karasu in the south, where rival candidates were now mobilizing hundreds of supporters to protest against results (International Crisis Group 2005).

Although the early pre-election protests had all taken place in the north, the focus was now shifting to the traditionally more volatile south of the country. In particular, Jalalabad was becoming the centre of opposition activity, much of it organized by the Bakiev family. On 4 March more than 1,000 supporters of Jusupbek Bakiev seized control of the regional administration building in the town, and several dozen protestors occupied the building for the next two weeks, hardly troubled by any attempt by the police to regain control. They were still there on 13 March 2005, when a second round of voting was held in the remaining constituencies. This

time, there were even more allegations of vote-rigging, perhaps because many of the international observers had left after the first round. Several opposition politicians won their races, including Dooronbek Sadyrbaev, Omurbek Tekebaev, and Bolotbek Sherniyazov. But other key figures were deemed to have lost, notably Kurmanbek Bakiev and Adahan Madumarov. Other results were still disputed, but the election was now being overshadowed by a growing pattern of local protests over the election results, in many areas of the south, including Uzgen, Alay and Jalaabad, but also in Talas, where supporters of Ravshan Jeenbekov seized control of a government building and took officials hostage, after the electoral authorities claimed that he had lost in the second round of the poll.

For the first time the opposition began to unite and capitalize on this growing wave of protests, meeting for a Kurultai (a traditional form of popular forum) in Jalal-Abad on 15 March 2005. All the main opposition leaders were present, and they elected their own 'people's governor', Jusupbek Jeenbekov, thus beginning a successful tactic of developing parallel structures of power. On 18 March protestors seized the local administration building in Osh, and also appointed their own 'people's governor', effectively leaving the two largest southern cities under opposition control. But at this point, after prevaricating for days, the security services now tried to regain control. On 19 March special forces raided both the Osh and Jalal-Abad regional administration buildings and expelled opposition protestors; although force was used, there were no reports of serious injuries, but the use of security forces against the demonstrators merely increased the determination of opposition leaders and led to a radicalization of the mood among their supporters.

The morning after security forces regained control of the administration building in Jalal-Abad, the protestors, now numbering 10,000 or more, returned to the building and forced the police to retreat. The security forces did not use firearms, but it is not clear whether they had specific orders not to shoot. The crowds were now much more violent than previously, using petrol bombs and setting fire to a police station. They quickly regained control of the town, and shortly afterwards a similar crowd achieved the same result in Osh. In both places protestors seized control of the airports and roads, thus ensuring control of the entire south of the country. Local authority figures replaced many local officials with their own people, leading to chaos in local administrations and in the police. These ad hoc appointments would continue for several months, with different figures taking over, backed by small mobs of supporters.

In a sense, there were two parallel political processes in March 2005. While all these events had been occurring in the south, in the capital Bishkek (in the north) life carried on without any signs of significant unrest. There were some small protests, but nothing like the mass gatherings seen in the south. The government seemed unclear how to react, and only on 23 March did President Akaev order a clampdown. He appointed two new officials, as interior minister and prosecutor general, and criminal cases were launched against leading opposition figures. Police broke up an opposition rally of several hundred people in Bishkek, and it appeared briefly that the clampdown was having some effect. In reality, it was all too late, and there was evidently little enthusiasm in the police to take on the

role of defender of such an unpopular government. Since 2005 there has been speculation that the security forces had somehow achieved an agreement with the opposition, but no clear evidence has been produced. Akaev, however, has supported such a view:

> I understood that only after March 24. National Security authorities could not provide us full and correct information about the situation in the country … there is every reason to say that the national security authorities failed in their duty there. Probably they knew everything, but did not tell me. People say that, and there must be a reason for that. Today I also think that they were negotiating with the opposition – not about easing the situation – but about cooperation after a takeover
>
> (RFE/RL 2006).

At this stage it was not certain that the opposition would try to oust Akaev. Although their more hot-headed supporters were now intent on forcing Akaev to quit, there was probably still scope for negotiations. Reports suggest that Akaev and the presidential family were not prepared to negotiate and were having problems understanding the significance and seriousness of the situation (International Crisis Group 2005). Opposition leaders were mostly still in the south, but they now gradually began to converge on Bishkek, and agreed to hold a rally in the capital on 24 March. For the first time, this rally brought together protestors from Bishkek itself with the now battle-hardened demonstrators from the south, who were bussed up to the capital by Bakiev, Beknazarov, Otunbaeva and other leaders. There appears to have been little attempt to stop them from travelling north. In Bishkek meanwhile, Almaz Atambaev, a young businessman and opposition leader, and Jenishbek Nazaraliev, had been mobilizing young people to join in the demonstration. Finally, groups such as the youth group Kel-Kel and Bishkek-based NGOs were part of the mix.

Different opposition leaders had fundamentally divergent aims for the demonstration. Bishkek-based NGO leaders sought to emulate Ukraine, and hoped to establish a 'yurt city' on the central Ala-Too square, where they expected to camp out for several weeks if necessary, while developing political ideas for the future. With these groups the example of Georgia and Ukraine was very real. Some had travelled to Kyiv, and they had a wide range of contacts with Georgian, Ukrainian and other political activists. But other groups had different ideas. There is still considerable uncertainty about the agenda of some of the opposition leaders, but certainly demonstrators affiliated to some of the southern leaders demonstrated no interest in listening to speeches about democracy. After fighting broke out on the edge of the crowd, a group of protestors marched towards the riot police around the White House, and tried to force their way through. The police did not hold out for long, and the crowds were soon storming the White House and smashing up the interior. The opposition soon seized the television station, and some mobs started attacking shops, mostly those whose owners were believed to be linked in some way to the regime. There was widespread looting and several

stores were set on fire. Meanwhile, a delegation went to the prison to release Feliks Kulov.

By this time Akaev and his family had fled, and Bishkek was in chaos. Kulov took over control of the security situation, and after a few days it returned to normal. The old regime gave up very quickly, with most influential politicians switching sides as soon as possible. There was some fear of an attempt by members of Akaev's clan from his home region of Kemin to challenge the new rulers, but after negotiations Kemin leaders stepped back from any confrontation. Bakiev took over as acting president, pending Akaev's resignation; the new parliament, including all those deputies elected in the controversial poll, was permitted to remain in office; in exchange they provided constitutional sanction for the unconstitutional takeover of power by Bakiev and his supporters.

NGOs and the West

Immediately after the 24 March events, differing versions of what had happened were already circulating, with a particular emphasis in some press reports on the role of Western organizations and local NGOs (Peters, 2005; Shishkin, 2005; Smith, 2005). These rumours were fuelled by several different sources, all with a vested interest in exaggerating the role of Western organizations. Neighbouring countries, such as Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, along with Russia, were particularly attracted by such theories; many analysts in those states found it more convenient to view events through a geopolitical lens rather than focus on political failures inside Kyrgyzstan. Similarly, some (but not all) international organizations liked to stress that they played a role in the downfall of Akaev, at least in the initial period, when it seemed that his departure might lead to substantial improvements in the political system. Akaev himself appeared to be convinced that the West had been instrumental in his departure from office (Saralaeva 2004; Toursunoff 2004). The state-run newspaper had claimed that 'the aim [of the US] is to orchestrate mass unrest and disturbances, and thus overthrow the legitimate authorities and create a puppet government that is wholly dependent on external forces' (cited in Saralaeva 2004). However, Akaev's own views no doubt also had multiple motivations, not least the urge to deny his own culpability for the failure of his regime.

In reality local NGOs were not the critical institutions that mobilized mass protests, although they did fulfil certain important functions during the process. However, ahead of the February elections, NGOs in Bishkek could barely muster a couple of dozen people at demonstrations. NGOs simply did not have the wide network of grass-roots members who would follow leaders onto the streets for political protests. As Radnitz has pointed out (2006: 133), much mobilization was conducted by mid-level elites in the regions, where most NGOs had little influence. There were civil society activists in the square on 24 March, but most protestors were not urban NGO activists, nor were they from youth organizations like Kel-Kel; most were from outside the city and were followers of specific opposition leaders, particularly key southern politicians and authority figures.

International NGOs were active in the run-up to the February election in

particular, and were instrumental in building pressure on Akaev in relation to the conduct of the election, and also over his succession strategy. The US embassy, in particular, was very critical of Akaev and his officials, despite the agreement to host a US-led coalition base in the country in support of the intervention in Afghanistan. The strongest international NGOs were also largely US-funded, notably the National Democratic Institute (NDI), which was frequently the target of rhetorical attacks by the government. Other groups, such as the Soros Foundation, which had been accused of involvement in events in Georgia, had a low political profile in Kyrgyzstan, and were not directly involved in the election campaign. The main international effort was aimed at making the elections fairer, primarily through technical assistance and by funding observer missions. Certainly most opposition-oriented NGOs were dependent on international funding, but such funding was primarily linked to various projects, and could seldom be diverted to pay for an election campaign or to fund protests etc. Indeed, the opposition was extremely frustrated ahead of the February elections that they could not find any international organizations that would provide them with financial support during the electoral campaign (Lewis 2008a). International funding was more influential in keeping independent media going, notably the newspaper *MSN*, for which the US funded effectively an entirely independent printing press, to ensure it could continue to publish, and Radio Free Europe.

Conclusion

The overthrow of President Akaev did not achieve the kind of objectives, such as democratic reform, free and fair elections, and an end to corruption and nepotism, that were the slogans of many of the demonstrators and protestors in Bishkek in March 2005. Instead, President Bakiev presided over a government that managed to be worse than the pre-2005 regime in many key areas of governance. The revolution turned sour for many activists who took part in it, posing serious questions about the role of civil society and the political opposition in such political systems, and broader issues about the democratization agenda of the international community.

Yet, these attitudes have also contributed to a rejection of any sense of popular involvement in the events of March 2005, but the ousting of Akaev cannot simply be reduced to being a carefully engineered coup d'état. It built on a widespread sense of discontent and injustice that fuelled the mobilization of masses by mid-level regional elites, and that for a moment bound together a wide range of people, with diverse long-term goals, but united by a common short-term purpose. That discontent did not simply emerge during the election period: it had developed over many years, and in particular had been channelled and accentuated by events in Aksy.

Aksy was the first of many tactical mistakes by Akaev, the most significant of which was his reform of the electoral system, which almost guaranteed that elections would be accompanied by widespread unrest. Coupled with his refusal to order the security forces to use force, and their general reluctance in any case to use

force after their role in the Aksy events, the regime had very little ability to oppose the mobilization of large numbers of citizens. In effect, there was no cost attached to participation in demonstrations, and much greater costs in some communities (social ostracism, loss of access to local leaders) associated with opposing anti-government protests. It was noticeably easier to mobilize large groups of people in the periphery, outside Bishkek, than in the capital, where these social costs of avoiding participation had little effect, and there was greater fear that political activity might have negative consequences.

Against this background of mid-level mobilization, a successful transition to a more stable political system would always be complicated by significant differences among competing political groups, with the experience of successful political protests fresh in the minds of all politicians. Nevertheless, Bakiev and his allies were experienced at managing the system of power that Akaev had developed, and after they came to power they set about managing both the political system and the economy using many of the traditional tactics that had produced widespread discontent among both elites and the wider population in the late 1990s. As a result, the political situation remained relatively unstable, and the government gradually adopted a more repressive approach to political opponents. In this sense, the 'revolution' was far from transformatory; instead events in Kyrgyzstan appear to support Hale's thesis that many of the colour revolutions were about cyclical rather than transformational change (Hale 2005).

International influence was not the primary driver of the so-called 'Tulip Revolution', but it did provide an important context and backdrop for the events of March 2005. The previous revolutions in Georgia, and in Ukraine, were not copied by the Kyrgyz, but they did provide an enabling international environment, which made sure that at least some in the opposition believed that it was possible to topple Akaev, and that there would not be any kind of external intervention against them if they did succeed. The fact that Moscow had not been able to prevent the overthrow of Sheverdnadze or swing the election in Ukraine in favour of their preferred candidate was probably a factor in the Kyrgyz opposition pushing for increasingly radical outcomes. However, in the fast-paced events of 24 March, the international community had little ability to influence outcomes. Instead, the Tulip revolution was primarily the outcome of a complex internal political process, in which elites gradually shifted away from support for Akaev, and were able to mobilize popular protest against the regime, based on their own personal appeal and also on widespread discontent with the corruption and nepotism of the Akaev government.

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5 Moldova

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Introduction

The 'colour revolutions' in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan had far-reaching repercussions within the former Soviet Union. These revolutions, starting in 2003 with the displacement of President Eduard Shevardnadze in Georgia's 'Rose Revolution,' seemed to signal that the semi-democratic states that developed in the wake of independence were vulnerable to strong opposition movements. The question immediately arose – were governments in other areas of the former Soviet Union, especially those with political competition but less-than-full democracy, such as Kazakhstan, Moldova and Russia, also vulnerable?

With elections in March 2005, attention turned to the small republic of Moldova. Situated between Romania and Ukraine, and with similar social, political and geographic splits, Moldova seemed a logical place for the next colour revolution. While in Bratislava, US President George W. Bush seemed to openly call for such action, saying, 'The democratic revolutions that had arrived in Central and Eastern Europe 15 years ago have recently reached Georgia and Ukraine. In ten days the citizens of Moldova, too, will get their chance to capitalize their democratic potential, when they walk to polling stations.' He called upon citizens in Moldova and Belarus to 'step up to Freedom' (*Reporter.md* 24 February 2005a).

Bush was not alone in casting doubt on the legitimacy of Moldova's elections and calling for reform. Almost a month before the election, the US Senate unanimously approved a resolution put forward by Senators Richard Lugar, John McCain and Joseph Biden, which was critical of the ruling Communist Party and stated that, 'The soon coming elections and the campaign that will precede them will be a test on the seriousness of the democratic commitments and of European Integration undertaken by Chişinău authorities' (*Reporter.md* 21 February 2005). The European Union made similar statements, arguing that democratic conditions had been undermined in the country during the 2005 elections, and calling the fairness of the elections critical for Moldova's continued European integration (*Reporter.md* 24 February 2005b; *Infotag* 2 February 2005). Even Moldovan President Vladimir Voronin expressed some concerns about a 'corn putsch' by opposition parties, although he denied the existence of a revolutionary situation and characterized discussion of a Moldovan revolution 'the peak of nonsense and irresponsibility' (*Reporter.md* 9 February 2005).

Indeed, the 2005 elections produced nothing close to a Moldovan 'colour revolution.' Not only did the ruling Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova (PCRM) return to a majority in Parliament, but the leader of the PCRM, Vladimir Voronin, was re-elected to the presidency through a 'red-orange' coalition between the PRCM and their arch rivals the Christian Democratic People's Party (CDPP).

What happened? Moldova had many characteristics similar to the countries that underwent revolutions, but experienced a different outcome. By undertaking a deep exploration of why Moldova did not experience a revolution in 2005, this chapter helps to elucidate the factors that are critical for, and may short-circuit, successful opposition in semi-democratic regimes. In the broader volume, exploration of unsuccessful opposition prevents selection on the dependent variable, which undermines the ability to draw broader inference from the experiences of CIS countries.

This chapter argues that Voronin and the PCRM were returned to power because of three factors: (1) the failure of the opposition to unify around a leader or platform, and the lack of effective grass-roots organization by the opposition; (2) the relatively strong economic growth and political stability under the PCRM since 2001 and the party's resulting popularity; and (3) Voronin's decision to Westernize his foreign policy by stressing European integration.

This chapter also makes a fourth argument about a 'quiet revolution', driven by international actions, popular opinion and civil society, which took place in Moldova's politics from 2001 to 2005. That the government was returned to power does not mean Moldova's politics have remained static. Indeed, the political climate in 2005 had changed markedly since the PCRM was first elected in 2001. This change is reflected most clearly in the emerging consensus in public opinion and civil society around the issue of European integration. This consensus has dramatically altered the political environment, and has increased the influence of European institutions on Moldovan public policy. Even the PCRM, who originally came to power on promises of closer relations with Russia and joining the Russia-Belarus trade union, has accepted the primacy of this goal. While certainly not as dramatic as the colour revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, this quiet revolution in Moldova's international orientation and domestic goals carries great implications for Moldova's future.

Foundations of a Non-Revolution

Before understanding what happened in the 2005 election, one must first appreciate the economic and political problems that brought the PCRM to power, and why some analysts felt that a colour revolution was likely.

Moldova has had an especially rough transition since its declaration of independence from the Soviet Union on 27 August 1991. The country experienced a rapid decline in its economic position because of unusually harsh terms of trade shocks. By 1993, Moldova's economy was about one-third of its pre-transition levels, and, without access to significant mineral or fuel resources with which to offset current account deficits, Moldova's economy was also slower to recover than other post-Soviet states (Hensel and Gudim 2000). Moldova's economic downturn is widely

considered the most extreme of the post-Soviet states, and Moldova now holds the dubious distinction of being the poorest country in Europe.

Moldova has also experienced difficulties in establishing an identity as an independent state. These difficulties were punctuated by separatist threats in the early 1990s, after fears that Moldova's nationalist government would reunify Moldova with Romania sparked separatist movements in the primarily Russian-speaking area of Transnistria and the Turkic area of Gagauzia. In Gagauzia, an accommodation was reached which gave it significant autonomy and averted bloodshed. Unfortunately, compromise failed in Transnistria, and the conflict resulted in a short, but bloody, civil war in 1992. The conflict was halted through Russian intervention, freezing the conflict for the indefinite future. Transnistria currently remains a de facto independent state within Moldova's borders, and Russian peacekeepers maintain the boundary between the regions.

Social and economic instability were reflected in the instability of the leadership. Mircea Snegur, the leader of Moldova's Popular Front, was elected president of the Soviet republic in October 1990, but a year later he split with the Popular Front over his opposition to immediate reunification with Romania. In December 1991, he was elected the first president of an independent Moldova in an unopposed election, despite threats of a boycott by the Popular Front.

Early popular support for Snegur eroded quickly in the face of economic struggle. In the 1996 presidential election, he lost in a runoff against the Speaker of the Moldovan Parliament, and former first secretary of the Communist Party of Moldova, Petru Lucinschi. Lucinschi, however, fared no better in office. Parliament considered several votes of no confidence against Lucinschi's government and dismissed a succession of pro-Western prime ministers. To break through his oppositional parliament, Lucinschi moved to strengthen his authority through popular referendum. Not only did the referendum fail to get the votes it needed to pass, but, in 2000, Parliament exercised its authority to turn Moldova into a parliamentary republic, abolishing direct elections of the president. From this point on, Moldova's president would be elected by a 2/3 vote of the parliament. Lucinschi defended his move to strengthen the presidency, saying that it was necessary for the effective functioning of the government and to reduce uncertainty for foreign investors (Botsan 2001). He also accused his opponents of undermining his plan for their own gain, suggesting that they were keeping the power of parliament to protect their own influence.[1]

In the elections of 25 February 2001, which were generally judged to be free and fair, the PCRM won (see OSCE/ODIHR 2001). The party secured 50.07 per cent of the popular vote, and, because of the relatively high threshold for representation (6 per cent), the party received 71 of the 101 seats in Parliament. This gave the party more than enough votes to elect its leader, Vladimir Voronin, the new president. In electing the PCRM, Moldova gained the unique distinction of being the first country in the former Communist bloc to democratically elect an unreformed Communist party to power.

This victory capped an impressive comeback for the Communist Party in Moldova. Re-legalization was not achieved until April 1994, after the party

renounced any claims to the property of the Communist Party of Moldova (CPM). The first elections for the party were the 1995 local elections and the 1996 presidential election. In both of these elections, the PCRM performed respectably, reaching 16.32 per cent in 1995 and 10.23 per cent in 1996. By the time of the 2001 elections, the PCRM had achieved impressive gains in both its size and popular support. In just seven years of legal existence, the party managed to more than triple its share of the popular vote and to almost double its membership (estimated at 5,804 in 1997 and 10,362 in 2001).[2]

The victory of the PCRM was also a more general turning point for Moldova's political process. All of Moldova's elections since independence had been judged free and fair by international observers. Similarly, while private media outlets had clear biases towards particular candidates, the state-owned media provided generally unbiased coverage (OSCE/ODIHR 2001; Freedom House 2002). For all the faults in the political system, and for all the attempts by various factions to establish a legal advantage, politics in Moldova remained highly competitive. This competition is attributable to the inability of any particular group or faction to attract enough resources to support more monopolistic uses of power (Way 2002).

The tightly organized and very popular PCRM did not face the same restrictions and set about entrenching its electoral advantage. In April 2001, Parliament fired the top executives at the state radio and television stations for not being politically balanced. In each of the following elections, observers noted a strong bias among state media outlets towards the PCRM (OSCE/ODIHR 2003, 2005; *Reporter.md* 16 February 2005). Between elections in 2001 and 2005, the EU, OSCE and Moldovan civil society groups noted serious deterioration in other areas of democratic performance. This included the arrest of opposition candidates during the 2003 local elections, lack of trust in the Central Electoral Commission, problems in registering voters, abuses of administrative resources, the control of the ruling party over public media, and pressure exerted on private media (*Reporter.md* 24 February 2005b; OSCE/ODIHR 2003; *Infotag* 1 March 2005, 3 March 2005). Some scholars went so far as to argue that the establishment of a parliamentary system, by allowing one party to gain control over all branches of power, brought about the end of democracy in Moldova (Mazo 2004). Although this author believes that those claims are exaggerated, it is difficult to deny that there had been a substantial rollback of outlets for the opposition by the 2005 elections.

The PCRM's policies gave rise to regime characteristics and forms of opposition similar to those in countries that experienced colour revolutions. From the perspective of political regime types, Moldova would seem to be in a position similar to that of other 'hybrid' regimes. Also called semi-authoritarian regimes, semi-democratic regimes, competitive authoritarian regimes or electoral democracies, these regimes allow some level of political competition, but limit this competition through restricting the operation of the opposition (see Levitsky and Way 2002; Diamond 2002; Karl 1995; Ottaway 2003; Howard and Roessler 2006). These regimes cannot be said to be fully democratic, but they do have some democratic characteristics. Additionally, because they allow for some operation on the part of the opposition, they are especially vulnerable to 'liberalizing electoral

outcomes,' such as the colour revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine (Howard and Roessler, 2006).

In response, the opposition demonstrated a willingness to take their case to the streets in protest. Mass protests broke out after the government reintroduced the November 7 holiday commemorating the October revolution, introduced legislation to make Russian the official second language of the country, and proposed mandatory Russian-language instruction in schools. Led by the Christian Democratic Popular Party (CDPP), these protests lasted through the first part of 2002, and were estimated to have exceeded 100,000 people at times. In retribution, the government suspended the CDPP and moved to lift the parliamentary immunity of the CDPP chairman, Iurie Roşca, which would have opened him to criminal prosecution. The Council of Europe (CE) intervened to quell the hostilities between the two sides. In March 2002, nearly 500 journalists and media workers at the state-owned TeleRadio Moldova held demonstrations against alleged censorship. This prompted the government, again in cooperation with the CE, to transfer control of the station to an independent corporation.

At the simplest level, a colour revolution requires two background conditions: (1) a perception that elections are not fairly conducted and (2) an opposition willing to utilize popular protests. Both of these appeared to be present in Moldova leading into the 2005 elections.

The similarities between Moldova and the states that experienced colour revolutions were not lost on the media or the major parties. Three days before the 2005 parliamentary elections, *Infotag* asked the same two questions of representatives of the major parties, the first being whether events in Georgia and Ukraine would be repeated in Moldova. Veronica Abramciuc, co-chair of the Patria-Rodina bloc, was one of the leaders to answer affirmatively, saying that 'a revolution of some colour is quite possible in this republic.' Iurie Emilian of the Peasants' Christian Democratic Party (PCDP) also argued that 'a revolution is quite possible here, but only if the opposition unites.' Other leaders gave similar answers, saying that a fraudulent election could lead to a colour revolution from the opposition.

Not all of the candidates agreed with this assessment. Svetlana Burlac of the Patria-Rodina Labor Union suggested that there could be negative reactions if the PCRM gained more the 30 per cent, but went on to say, 'popular indignation in this republic will hardly be comparable with those in Georgia and Ukraine.' Similarly, the representatives of the PCRM and Republican Party categorically argued that 'nothing of the sort will happen here' (*Infotag* 3 March 2005).

The Colour Revolution that Wasn't

Twenty-three electoral competitors were registered for the 6 March 2005 election, including nine political parties and public political movements, two electoral blocs, and twelve independent candidates.[3] Of these contestants, five were considered likely to surpass the vote threshold for representation. The ruling PCRM was elected in 2001 on a traditional communist platform, promising to resolve the Transnistria conflict, create closer relations with Russia, and bring back some

of the prosperity from the communist era. In this election, however, the PCRM changed its campaign significantly, as will be discussed below. The CDPP had a platform strongly oriented toward integration with the EU and better relations with Romania. The Democratic Moldova Bloc (BMD), which was made up of a group of centrist parties, supported better relations with Russia and European integration. The Social Democratic Party of Moldova (PSDM) mainly appealed to small entrepreneurs and focused on public participation in government. Finally, the Patria-Rodina electoral bloc ran on a far-left and pro-Russian platform. In order to gain a seat under Moldova's electoral rules, independent candidates needed at least 3 per cent of the vote, parties needed at least 6 per cent, blocs consisting of two parties needed 9 per cent, and those with more than two parties needed 12 per cent. These thresholds were relatively high, and had been a point of contention with international observers for several elections.[4]

The campaign itself was generally quiet and uneventful. Perhaps President Voronin summed it up best when he characterized the campaign as 'anemic' (*Reporter.md* 9 February 2005). Part of this was due to confusion over legal provisions for news coverage of campaign events. Article 47 of the Election Code advised TV and radio programs to cover campaign activities of contestants, but Article 46 stated that electoral issues could be reflected only as 'press news.' The result was that media outlets avoided covering campaign activities, but still covered 'official events' of the ruling party. To address this imbalance, on 10 February, the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) ruled that the physical appearance of government officials running as candidates was prohibited on TV news, except in special cases. The result, however, was not so much an increase in the balance of news coverage as a further lack of information about the campaign on radio and TV. On 23 February, the CEC again changed the media policy to encourage more coverage of the campaign, obliging public broadcasters to organize 90-minute debates every day, including Sundays, and mandating broadcasters covering the campaign to air five news stories on electoral events in each newscast (OSCE/ODIHR 2005: 12). This last ruling was useful for promoting greater coverage of the campaign, but came too late to make a major difference. In addition, the Electoral Code allocated minimal space for campaign posters and materials. This was further compounded by local authorities, who either interpreted the law in a very restrictive manner or simply failed to implement it (OSCE/ODIHR 2005: 9). Local authorities in some areas obstructed campaign rallies by either not authorizing the premises or by obstructing participation. All of this resulted in a limited amount of campaign material and information for the public.

The ruling party enjoyed several advantages that undermined the fairness of the elections. The media coverage that was available tended to focus heavily on President Voronin and the ruling PCRM. For example, OSCE media monitors estimated that, from 1 February to 4 March, the channel Moldova 1 gave about 73 per cent of its time to covering the ruling party and officials affiliated with it in either a positive or neutral context (OSCE/ODIHR 2005: 12. See also *Infotag* 1 March 2005). The OSCE received credible reports of pressure on public employees,

police officers abusing their power, and abuse of administrative resources (OSCE/ODIHR 2005: 10).

The results of the election closely mimicked pre-election expectations. The non-partisan Institute of Public Policy (IPP) of Moldova reported that 46.7 per cent of the respondents in their January-February 2005 poll said they would vote for the PCRM (IPP, January-February 2005: 26). Similarly, the independent International Institute of Humanitarian and Political Studies (IGPI) found 48 to 49 per cent of eligible voters expressing the intention to vote for the PCRM in their poll released in early February (*Infotag* 17 February 2005).[5] In the official results, the PCRM received 45.98 per cent of the popular vote. This was followed by the 'Democratic Moldova' electoral bloc, with 28.53 per cent of the vote, and the CDPP, with 9.07 per cent of the vote. None of the other parties cleared the threshold for representation. This resulted in 56 seats for the PCRM, 34 for the BMD, and 11 for the CDPP. [6] The full election results, along with pre-election polls from IPP and IGPI, are listed in Table 4.1.

Prior to the election, there was quite a bit of uncertainty over how the opposition would react to the PCRM returning to a majority. In the IGPI poll, voters were split 50/50 over whether protest rallies inspired by the election would take place (*Infotag* 17 February 2005). While there were some protests from the opposition, they were substantially milder than expected. The Social Democratic Party of Moldova said that it would not recognize the results of the elections (*Reporter.md* 10 March 2005b), the 'Patria-Rodina' electoral bloc said that the results could not be validated (*Reporter.md* 10 March 2005a), and the CDPP asked for the CEC to repeat a manual count of the votes (*Reporter.md* 11 March 2005). Aside from these public statements, little else happened in protest of the elections, certainly nothing near the scale of a 'colour revolution.'

Instead, a remarkable coalition began to take shape after the election. The PCRM had managed to secure a majority in Parliament, but failed to secure enough seats to re-elect Voronin to a second term as president. Initially, fears were aroused that Parliament would deadlock, and another election would have to take place. Chişinău Mayor, and leader of the 'Democratic Moldova' bloc (BDM), Serafim Urechean, stated repeatedly that the party would boycott the presidential elections and would not vote for a communist president (*Infotag* 11 March 2005; *Infotag* 14 March 2005; *Reporter.md* 29 March 2005; *Infotag* 1 April 2005). Before the election, the CDPP suggested a coalition with the BDM, so long as Urechean was not the presidential candidate (*Infotag* 15 February 2005). After the election, however, Roşca quickly backtracked, denying that the CDPP would take part in any coalitions (*Infotag* 9 March 2005). Rather than forming a coalition, Roşca suggested that it would be better for Parliament to fail in electing a new president, prompting new Parliamentary elections in which the 16 per cent of voters who voted for smaller parties could coalesce behind the CDPP.

In a public vote of the Parliament on 4 April, Voronin was re-elected, only twenty-six days after Roşca suggested that his party would rather see Parliament dissolve than see Voronin return to office. Even more remarkable than the 75 votes he received (out of 78 votes cast) was where the votes came from. Before the vote

Table 4.1 Pre-Election Polls and Electoral Outcomes in Moldova's 2005 Parliamentary Elections

Party Name	*IPP Poll*	*IGPI Poll*	*Percent of Valid Votes*	*Mandates*
Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova (PCRM)	46.7	48-49	45.98	56
Electoral Bloc Democratic Moldova (BMD)	15.9	25	28.53	11
Christian Democratic People's Party (CDPP)	9.2	10-11	9.07	34
Social Democratic Party of Moldova (PSDM)	3.3	8-9	2.92	0
Patria-Rodina Electoral Bloc	0.4	–	4.97	0
Silvia Chirilov	–	–	0.20	0
Socio-Political Republican Movement 'Ravnopravie'	0.1	–	2.83	0
Centrist Union of Moldova	0.2	–	0.75	0
Alexandru Busmachiu	–	–	0.05	0
"Patria-Rodina" Labor Union	–	–	0.92	0
Maia Laguta	–	–	0.06	0
Ştefan Matei	–	–	0.12	0
Christian Democratic Peasants' Party of Moldova	–	–	1.37	0
Andrei Ivanţoc	–	–	0.11	0
Alexandru Arsenii	–	–	0.04	0
Alexei Busuioc	–	–	0.06	0
Tudor Tătaru	–	–	0.15	0
Fiodor Ghelici	–	–	0.07	0
Victor Slivinschi	–	–	0.03	0
Anatolii Soloviov	–	–	0.03	0
Republican Party of Moldova	–	–	0.04	0
Mircea Tiron	–	–	0.02	0
Party of Social-Economic Justice of Moldova	–	–	1.66	0
'Don't know'	15.8	–	–	–
'I would not vote'/ 'no response'	8.4	–	–	–

took place, commentators had speculated that the most likely source of compromise would come from breakaway members of the BDM, including the Democratic Party and Social Liberal Party. Some of these parliamentarians did indeed support Voronin's candidacy. The main area of support, however, came not from these breakaway groups, but from the PCRM's arch rivals, the CDPP.

In exchange for supporting Voronin's candidacy, Roşca was elected Vice Speaker of Parliament four days later, and Voronin agreed to pursue a list of demands presented by the CDPP. These included several changes to decrease the PCRM's influence over the media, such as a new law on mass media, changes in the membership of the Audiovisual Coordinating Council (to include members of the opposition), legal guarantees of freedom of speech, and to halt government funding of the newspapers *Nezavisimaya Moldova* and *Moldova Suverana* (which were biased towards the PCRM during the election). The CDPP also asked for stronger regulation and transparency in government spending, including new Audit Chamber legislation (to decrease the influence of the governing party) and tougher controls over public funds. Finally, the compromise called for reforming the court system to insure judicial independence, updating the Chief Prosecutor's legislation (to make the office more independent of the government), passing amendments to the Electoral Code and securing the independence of the CEC (to ensure greater representation of opposition parties), and improving the security service legislation to impose public and parliamentary control over their activity (*Infotag* 5 April 2005).

The 'red-orange' coalition between the Communist Party and the CDPP caught many analysts by surprise. Aside from the animosity between the groups from the banning of the PCRM by the CDPP's predecessor, the protests by the CDPP in 2002, and the attempted prosecution of CDPP leaders by the ruling PCRM, there had been little indication of improving relations during the election. CDPP candidates had even taken to wearing orange ties during the campaign and party campaign posters were printed in orange, an obvious appeal to the Ukrainian 'Orange Revolution.'

So why was there no 'colour revolution' in Moldova? What factors allowed the PCRM to return to power with relatively little protest and in an alliance with an arch-nemesis? These questions are of substantial importance for any discussion of revolutionary politics in the former Soviet Union. Only exploring cases where a revolutionary outcome takes place will not give us a clear idea of what factors are really important. There must be some manner of discriminating between situations like those that existed in Georgia and Ukraine, from those that existed in Moldova. The following section outlines several reasons why revolutionary calls failed in Moldova.

Why No Revolution in Moldova?

This section argues that there are three reasons why there was no colour revolution in Moldova: (1) the failure of the opposition to unify around a particular leader or platform, and the lack of grass-roots support for the opposition; (2) the relatively

strong economic growth under the PCRM since 2001 and the party's resulting popularity; and (3) Voronin's decision to Westernize his foreign policy by stressing European integration, a move that had substantial importance for the PCRM's popularity and its relations with civil society.

Opposition Disunity

Returning to the literature on hybrid regimes, there has been considerable discussion of the factors that lead to 'liberalizing electoral outcomes.' One of the most important factors is whether the opposition is able to unite. According to Howard and Roessler, there are four reasons that opposition unity increases the chances of leadership turnover. First, when the opposition is united, the incumbent will have a more difficult time using patronage and coercion to get votes. Second, it prevents the incumbent from turning opposition groups against each other – the classic 'divide and conquer' strategy. Third, it increases the perceived costs of repression and manipulation, as police and bureaucrats are less likely to use illegal practices if the opposition is organized enough to mount a credible challenge to the government. Finally, opposition unity increases the public perception that change is possible, mobilizing people to vote and protest (Howard and Roessler 2006: 371). For these reasons, Howard and Roessler find that opposition unity is the most important common explanation for 'liberalizing electoral outcomes' since 1990.

In the case of Moldova, opposition unity would have primarily served two of these purposes. With the high electoral thresholds in Moldova, the multitude of smaller political parties served to fragment some portions of the opposition vote. The direct effect of this fragmentation was a large number of wasted votes, amounting to about 16.4 per cent of all valid votes. Indirectly, disputes between the main opposition groups, the CDPP and BMD, served to further the perception of the opposition as fragmented, unsteady, and a risky alternative to the relatively stable administration of the PCRM. This lack of trust and mobilization for opposition candidates is reflected in the IPP polling. In an open-ended question asking which politician in Moldova the respondent trusted the most, only 6.4 per cent mentioned Serafim Urecheanu, the leader of BMD, and 4.3 per cent mentioned Iurie Roşca, leader of the CDPP. This compares with 34.3 per cent who mentioned Vladimir Voronin and 21.1 per cent who responded that they did not trust any politicians. The results were similar when respondents were prompted with party leaders' names and asked for their level of trust. PCRM leaders Voronin and Prime Minister Vasile Tarlev had the most trust, with 63.5 and 47 per cent respectively answering that they had some trust or much trust in these figures. In comparison, Serafim Urecheanu had 38.4 per cent trust and Iurie Roşca had 20.8 per cent (IPP January-February 2005: 35–58).

In a country that has experienced a pronounced and chronic crisis in both the economic and political spheres, disunity and bickering among opposition leaders chipped away at popular trust in their ability to govern. Again, this was reflected in popular opinion. In response to a question about which political party could best improve the situation in Moldova, 43.9 per cent of respondents named the

Communist Party. This compares to 9.1 per cent for the CDPP, 15.4 per cent for the BMD, and 17.5 per cent for 'do not know' (IPP January-February 2005: 53).

Hampering the opposition's efforts further was their relatively 'anemic' campaign. Some of this can be attributed to the lack of unity among the opposition, but much of it can be attributed to the lack of popular mobilization for opposition parties outside of the major cities. While popular concern for the electoral outcome seems to have been relatively high, knowledge about the candidates was low for most people. Popular concern for the elections was reflected in public opinion polls and electoral turnout. About 55.1 per cent of respondents on the IPP poll said that they had 'much' or 'very much' concern about the 2005 elections (IPP January-February 2005, p. 56). Additionally, 64.8 per cent of those on the voter lists showed up to vote (OSCE/ODIHR 3 June 2005). Yet, many of the same people who reported a lot of concern for the election also reported a lack of information about the candidates. When asked the extent to which they were aware of the 'required information about candidates and parties in order to make a right decision' on their vote, 58.4 per cent responded that they were only aware 'to a small extent' or 'to a very small extent', and an additional 8.9 per cent said that they 'did not know' (IPP January-February 2005: 55).

This reflects a serious problem for the opposition – most of the parties are just now developing nationwide bases of support. In an interview with an international observer who has worked with several of these smaller parties, he expressed frustration with the lack of grass-roots campaigning by opposition parties. Compared with the broad national campaign put together by the PCRM in parliamentary elections, opposition parties lack serious capacity in many areas of the country.[7] This results in corresponding limitations in their constituency. The CDPP's constituency remains primarily limited to those who identify their nationality as Moldovan or Romanian. In the IPP poll question asking which party people would vote for if the election were next Sunday, the CDPP literally received no expressions of support from those who identified as Russian. The BMD's support was a little more diverse, but support from Russian and Ukrainian nationalities was still about 67.4 and 81.1 per cent lower. The PCRM also tends to do better in the rural areas. About 40.5 per cent of respondents in urban areas expressed an intention of voting for the PCRM, compared with 51.3 per cent in rural areas. Interestingly, the PCRM's relative weakness in urban areas does not translate into greater support for the main opposition parties. The CDPP only drew .1 per cent more support from urban-dwellers, and the BMD only drew .5 per cent more (IPP January-February 2005: 61). This likely reflects the increased fragmentation of support for a number of smaller opposition parties in urban areas. In the latest (2007) local elections, opposition representatives to local councils came from a number of parties, including a large number of representatives in Chişinău from the very localized Liberal Party (see *Oxford Analytica*25 June 2007).

Popularity of the PCRM

Another important factor in why no colour revolution took place is the relative popularity of the PCRM. Indeed, the categorization of Moldova in the same regime category as Georgia or Ukraine may be disputed, since one of the major characteristics of an authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regime is its use of repression and patronage to continue support of a government that could not win through normal elections (Gandhi and Przeworski 2007). This is clearly not the case in Moldova. While there may be some debate over how the PCRM would behave if it begins losing more popular support, opposition groups do not as yet have to demonstrate 'a level of opposition mobilization, unity, skill, and heroism far beyond what would normally be required for victory in a democracy' (Diamond 2002: 24). Indeed, Diamond (2002: 30) makes a distinction between the regimes in Georgia and Ukraine, which he labels 'ambiguous regimes,' Kyrgyzstan, which is labeled 'hegemonic electoral authoritarian,' and Moldova, which is placed in the more liberal category of 'electoral democracy.' Moldova may not have been a full-fledged liberal democracy, and the 2005 elections fell short of being free and fair, but the election lacked the appearance of fraud or ham-handed manipulation necessary to delegitimize the results.

In 2005, the PCRM had popularity commensurate with its vote share. As noted earlier, at least two public opinion polls showed support for the PCRM that were very close to the eventual vote share in the actual election. Looking at public opinion trends over time gives an even stronger indication of the PCRM's success in maintaining popular support from 2001 to 2005. In February 2001, trust in government was at 19 per cent and trust in Parliament was at 10 per cent. By February 2005, these numbers were up to 49 and 45 per cent respectively (IPP January-February 2005: 89). Similarly, in February 2001, only 8 per cent of Moldovans felt that the country was headed in the right direction, compared with 44 per cent in February 2005 (IPP January-February 2005: 85).

Much of the PCRM's success can be attributed to relatively strong economic growth from 2001 to 2005. As noted earlier, Moldova experienced one of the most pronounced economic downturns of the former Soviet countries. With instability in the government and the economy, many had resorted to leaving Moldova altogether. Figure 1 shows Moldova's economic growth since independence. From 2001 to 2005, Moldova began its first real experience with consistent economic growth since the end of Communism. As the PCRM stood for election in 2005, the economic news was relatively good, with 7.4 per cent growth in 2004 and average growth of 7.08 per cent from 2001 to 2005 (IMF 2008). That much of this was the result of broader regional growth and money orders from citizens working abroad was of secondary concern, compared to the re-emergence of some level of stability (*InfoMarket* 11 February 2005). Additionally, the economic platforms of the main opposition groups tended to offer little in the way of a cohesive alternative economic strategy (Volnitchi 2005).

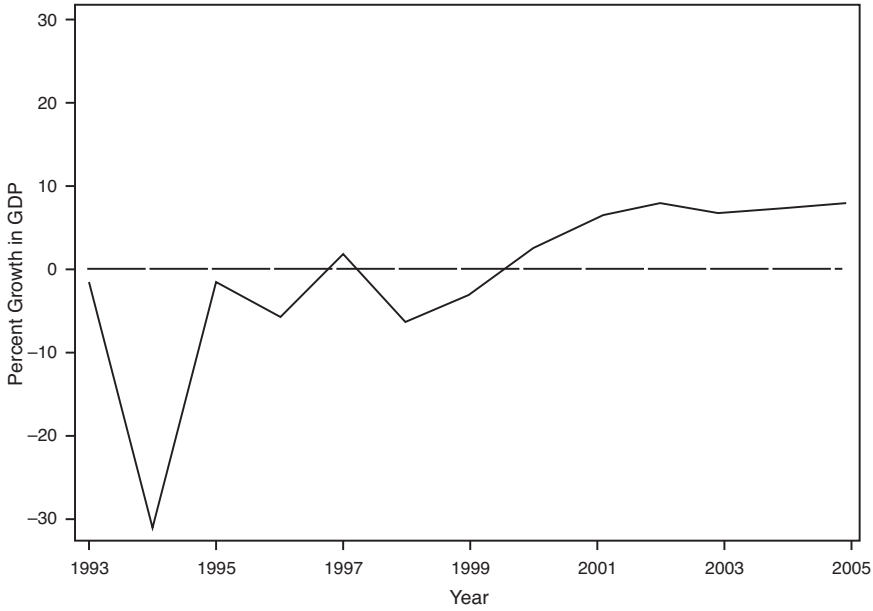

Figure 1 Growth in GDP in Moldova 1993–2001 (IMF 2008)

Voronin's Westward Shift

Voronin and the PCRM changed substantially between the 2001 and 2005 elections. Worsening relations with Russia caused Voronin to adopt a much more pro-Western policy, which split the constituencies of other major parties and allowed the 'red-orange' coalition.

Shortly after taking power, the PCRM took a number of actions that moved Moldova closer to Russia. Attempts to make Russian an official state language and introduce mandatory Russian-language instruction helped to solidify the PCRM's support base among those who self-identified as Russian. Public opinion polls suggest that the PCRM received 65.4 per cent of the vote of those identifying as Russian and 65.9 of those identifying as Ukrainian. Yet, despite efforts to promote closer relations with Russia and to solve the Transnistria crisis, relations quickly soured.

One of the main turning points came with Voronin's rejection of the Kozak Memorandum for resolving the situation in Transnistria. The memorandum, proposed by Russian politician Dmitri Kozak, a close ally of Putin's, would have established Moldova as a unified state, but would have also given Transnistria extraordinary blocking powers, effectively stopping any further movement towards EU accession. Moldova would have been an asymmetrical federal state. Both Transnistria and Gagauzia would have maintained their independent government organs, as well as their own constitutions, legislation, state property, independent budget, and tax system (section 3.5). They would also have had veto power over

international treaties (section 3.11), and the ability to secede if Moldova established an affiliation with a foreign state (section 3.13–3.14). Transnistria and Gagauzia would also have had disproportionate representation in a newly created upper house (the Senate). Of the 26 members, four would have been elected by the legislature of Gagauzia and nine would have been elected by the Transnistrian Supreme Soviet (section 9b). All decisions by the Senate until 2015 would have required the support of 75 per cent of the body. This would have given the regions disproportionate say over numerous issues, and would have effectively headed off Moldova's EU ambitions for the foreseeable future.[8] Moreover, President Igor Smirnov of Transnistria argued that the settlement must also include a treaty guaranteeing a Russian military presence in Moldova for 30 years.

Initially, Voronin expressed his support for the document. He, along with Igor Smirnov, initialed the document on 17 November 2003, and Voronin was initially quoted giving some support to the document.[9] This early support crumbled quickly in the face of parliamentary and social opposition however. On 21 November, representatives of 20 non-governmental organizations signed an appeal to the EU, US, Romania and Ukraine to stop the proposal. Three days later, Moldovan opposition parties held an extraordinary meeting in which they advocated rejection of the Russian proposal (Emerson, 2003). All of this was backed up by protests in Chişinău starting after the initial publication of the memorandum. In the end, Moldovan authorities refused to sign the document without the coordination of European organizations.

The refusal of Moldova to adopt the Kozak Memorandum was a political embarrassment for Russia. On 24 November, it was announced that Putin planned to visit Moldova on December 25 to sign the agreement with Voronin. The next day the trip was cancelled. At the OSCE meeting that year, disagreements between Russia on one side and the US and EU on the other over the issue of Moldova was one of the reasons why no joint declaration was adopted. After this embarrassment, relations between Russia and Moldova quickly deteriorated.

By the time of the elections in 2005, relations were at a low point. In February 2005, the Russian State Duma took up discussion of leveling sanctions against Moldova for what it characterized as 'economic sanctions' against Transnistria (*Infotag* 18 February 2005; *Interlic* 23 February 2005). Among the measures threatened by the Duma were delivering energy supplies to Moldova at world market prices (at the time they were subsidized), barring the import of alcohol and tobacco goods from Moldova, and introducing visas for Moldovan citizens to visit Russia.[10] After the elections, Iurie Roşca, leader of the CDPP, told the media that Russia had gone so far as to offer him money to organize a colour revolution in Moldova, apparently in an effort to promote instability in the country and undermine the PCRM (*Infotag* 6 April 2005). Roşca's accusations were never substantiated.

Worsening relations with Russia corresponded with strengthened relations with the European Union. In 2003, Moldova was included in the EU's European Neighborhood Policy, and an EU-Moldova Action Plan was formulated in the first part of 2004. This document entered into force on 22 February 2005, shortly before the Parliamentary elections (*Infotag* 22 February 2005). At least in terms of official policy, the PCRM fundamentally shifted from a focus on Russia and the CIS to

a focus on the EU and the pro-Western GUUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova) organization.

Voronin's support for closer relations with the West, as compared with Russia, was further underscored by a series of 'orange meetings' with Ukrainian President Viktor Yuschenko, Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, and Romanian President Traian Basescu. These meetings started with a telephone meeting between Voronin and Basescu to discuss European integration efforts for Moldova on 2 February and again on 1 March (*Interlic* 2 February 2005; *Interlic* 1 March 2005). Similarly, just a few days before the election, on 28 February, Voronin and Saakashvili held a telephone meeting to discuss territorial issues and the 'frozen conflicts' on their territory (Infotag 28 February 2005). This conversation was followed up by a meeting in Moldova between Voronin and Saakashvili that took place on 2 March, with public statements released on 3 March, just three days before the election (*Infotag* 2 March 2005; *Reporter.md* 3 March 2005). Perhaps the most surprising meeting was with Yuschenko. The 1 March visit was not planned and was not expected by Ukrainian authorities. As Yuschenko's press secretary, Irina Gherascenko, described it: 'The visit of the Moldovan president has surprised us, and we managed neither to invite the press nor to form an interstatal working group. Nonetheless, Viktor Yuschenko has showed himself willing to receive his Moldovan guest' (*Reporter.md* 1 March 2005). Some analysts characterized these meetings as empty posturing, meant to undermine the opposition (Cojocaru 2005). The message, however, was effective. These meetings with the leaders of the colour revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine, plus continuing discussions with Romania's president, served to give the impression of the PCRM as a pro-Western party that was dedicated to European integration.

This shift towards the West undermined the traditional electoral splits that had characterized politics in Ukraine and Georgia. Unlike in Ukraine, where Russia clearly favoured Victor Yanukovich, and the opposition was able to use Russia's influence as a rallying point for protest, Putin faced a dilemma with Moldova. After the embarrassment of the Kozak Memorandum, and the realization that the Communist Party would assert Moldova's independence from Russia, Putin and the Duma clearly did not want the PCRM to have another term. At the same time, the main alternatives to the PCRM were even more Western-oriented. Without a side to support, Russia was on the sidelines throughout the election, only able to threaten Moldova to either induce instability or push the PCRM back to a more Eastern-looking foreign policy.

This ambiguity of Russia's position, in turn, undermined opposition efforts to unite their supporters against an external opponent. Both the CDPP and BDM characterized the PCRM as an unreformed communist party that would undermine Moldova's chances of European integration. Such characterizations became more difficult to maintain as pictures and articles about Voronin's meetings with the leaders of the colour revolutions appeared in the press just before the election.

Voronin's shift towards the West also made possible the 'red-orange' coalition that took form after the election. As Voronin himself characterized it in his inauguration speech: 'This [the 'red-orange' coalition] is a peculiar result of the

political development endured by our society in the latest years. The past confrontation [with the CDPP] was finally crowned with the crystallization of a new common goal, and this meaning is perceived only within the European future for our country, and only in the concentration of all forces in the name of attaining this future' (*Infotag* 7 April 2005).

For these reasons, there was no colour revolution in Moldova. Yet, there had been a substantial shift in Moldova's policies that might be partially attributable to the events in Georgia and Ukraine. The next section discusses the strong turn in Moldova's politics towards European integration, and how this has substantially altered the political landscape.

A 'Quiet Revolution?'

A quiet revolution had been taking place in Moldova since 2001 in political society, civil society and popular attitudes. Part of this was due to increasing problems in relations with Russia, part was due to the expansion of the EU (especially discussions with Bulgaria and Romania), and part of it was due to the events in Ukraine and Georgia. As the international environment around Moldova changed, so did the orientation of Moldova's foreign policy and popular attitudes. By implication, these changed the attitudes of its political participants.

By the time of the 2005 elections, European integration had truly become a consensus issue for most of the major political parties, including the PCRM. Voronin even suggested shortly after the 2005 elections that the PCRM might change its name in order to gain greater credibility in the West (*Infotag* 23 March 2005).[11] The PCRM also nominated the then economic minister, Marian Lupu, as the Speaker of Parliament in 2005. Far from a Communist Party ideologue, Lupu was not even a member of the PCRM (*Interlic* 23 March 2005). In an interview with the executive secretary of the Socialist Party of Moldova Patria-Rodina bloc in 2006, he expressed the opinion that the PCRM had already changed policies so much that it could no longer be classified as 'communist.'[12]

The popularity of the EU is clear from public opinion. In five polls conducted from March 2002 to May 2004, those who expressed a 'rather good' or 'very good' opinion of the EU ranged from 52 to 66 per cent. In contrast, the opinion of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) dropped steadily from 60 per cent in March 2002 to 43 per cent in May 2004 (IPP April-May 2004: 119). Similarly, a November 2004 poll showed that 66 per cent of Moldovans would vote for European integration if given the chance in a referendum (IPP November 2007: 111). From August 2000 to May 2004, the number of respondents who said that joining the EU should be the primary foreign policy goal of Moldova went from 38 to 47 per cent, while joining the Russia-Belarus Union in an April 2003 poll (the only time it was included in the question) only drew about 16 per cent support (IPP November 2007: 111).

If anything, this trend towards support for EU integration has gathered speed. Today one will find EU flags hanging from cable car lines and on billboards during the celebration of Moldova's Independence Day, and a consistent pattern

within popular political dialogue relating to how policies will affect the changes of Moldova's eventual EU integration. This has serious implications for Moldova's domestic politics. Directly, this gives the EU a great deal of leverage over the conduct of Moldova's domestic politics. Both the EU and Council of Europe have the ability to review and give opinion on draft legislation in Moldova, and their advice is usually followed. Indirectly, research suggests that there is a strong correlation between a citizen's support for EU integration and their expectations on a range of political issues. Those who think that EU integration should be the primary goal of the state are more concerned with politics, are more supportive of democracy and civil rights, have higher levels of political efficacy and are more likely to participate in direct political actions (Kennedy 2007). This remains true when controlling for a number of demographic and social characteristics. The increasing identity of being 'European' seems to impact what people expect of their government and of their own role in the political system.

Conclusions

In some ways, the 2005 parliamentary elections in Moldova could be seen as a classic example of when a popular protest against an electoral victory is unlikely. First, when a party governs during a period of rapid economic expansion, such as the PCRM did, they are likely to be relatively popular and unlikely to fall either in a popular election or through public protest. The PCRM's victory was more due to the party's popularity than to any media bias or abuses of public resources. Second, the opposition did not put forth a unified and effective campaign against the PCRM. Disunity within the opposition made it difficult for any one party or bloc to mount an effective challenge to the PCRM, and, more importantly, undermined the opposition's attempts to portray itself as a reliable governing alternative. Finally, Voronin and the PCRM effectively shifted policies to reflect a growing consensus around European integration. This, along with high-profile meetings with the leaders of the colour revolutions, made the opposition's electoral appeals more difficult during the campaign, and created the opening for the 'red-orange' coalition that followed.

This does not mean, however, that there had not been a change in Moldova's domestic politics, or that the colour revolutions did not impact the political environment. The shift in the PCRM's attitude towards the West reflects broader social shifts in political attitudes. Greater emphasis on the European identity of Moldova has given the EU greater leverage over the domestic politics of the country and has also influenced individual attitudes towards democratization and governance. The maintenance of these attitudes and the fostering of this European identity have been key to Moldova's politics since 2005, and the continuing fostering of such an identity will play a key role in the future of Moldova.

Notes

1 Personal interview with Lucinschi, 22 January 2007.
2 See March (2006) for more details on the PCRM's comeback and the factors that led to it.
3 The parties were: the PCRM, the CDPP, the 'Democratic Moldova' bloc (BMD), the Social democratic Party of Moldova (PSDM), the Republic Public Political Movement 'Ravnopravie,' the Centrist Union of Moldova, the 'Patria-Rodina' electoral bloc, the 'Patria Rodina' Union of Labor, the Peasant's Democratic Christian Party of Moldova, the Republican Party of Moldova, and the Party of Social and Economic Justice of Moldova. Individuals running as independents included: Silvia Chirillova, Alexandr Busmachiu, Maia Laguta, Ştefan Matei, Andrei Ivanţoc, Alexandr Irsnii, Alexei Busuioc, Tudor Tătaru, Fiodor Ghelici, Victor Slivinschii, Anatolii Soloviev, and Mircea Tiron (Interlic, 8 February 2005).
4 See e.g. OSCE/ODIHR (3 April 2001). In the 2005 elections, the high thresholds resulted in 16.4 percent of voters not having their preferences represented. This was down from 28.3 percent in 2001.
5 IGPI accused the IPP of being biased for the Communist Party, citing a part of the IPP poll which made its way into the media. The part of the poll which they, and the earlier news article, cited was in response to a question which had informants name the party they would vote for without any prompting. Of those who responded with a party, a very high number named the PCRM. This is likely due to the quick turnover of opposition parties, and parties with the same name, which made them difficult for respondents to name without prompting. The question cited in this paragraph, however, prompted informants with a list of parties. When this was done, the IPP and IGPI polls were well within the margin of error, with the IPP predicting a lower vote share for the PCRM. In my interviews with top IPP personnel, I also did not find a bias towards the PCRM.
6 Central Electoral Commission of Moldova, 7 March 2005.
7 Interview, 21 June 2006. Name withheld at request of informant.
8 Transnistria and Gagauzia would also have had disproportionate representation in the Federal Constitutional Court, with the ability to appoint 5 of the 11 judges from their regional legislatures, required approval for all nominees from the Senate, and a requirement that all decisions until 2015 be made by at least 9 votes (sections 13.2 and 14.13).
9 'Moldovan society will succeed in finding the optimal solution after studying, discussion and improvement of this document' (quoted in Emerson, 2003, p. 3).
10 Russia later followed through on some of these threats. Since 2006, Moldova has been operating under an agreement with Russia to bring gas prices in line with world prices over a five-year span. Moldovan wine (along with Georgian wine) was banned in 2006. The ban was finally lifted, to a degree, in 2008.
11 This is a continuing debate within the PCRM. In personal interviews, two PCRM advisors, one an academic advisor with a think-tank oriented towards the PCRM and the other a member of the Central Committee of the party, either argued for the name change or suggested that a name change would likely happen soon. Changing the name from the Communist Party would be a strong indication of attitude change (Ishiyama, 1997).
12 Personal interview with Valentin Crîlov, 5 June 2006.

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6 Armenia

Mikayel Zolyan

Introduction

The case of Armenia has been largely overlooked in the analytical literature on 'colour revolutions'. The commonly accepted view that Armenia has never gone through a 'colour revolution' can be considered valid in a sense that Armenia has never experienced a change of government through peaceful mass protests. However, events that can be described as 'attempted colour revolutions' have taken place in post-Soviet Armenia. Some Armenian political analysts suggested that Armenia was the first post-Soviet country that experienced events that would have been called 'an attempted colour revolution' if the term itself existed at the time: a disputed election followed by mass protests and attempted overthrow of government took place in Armenia in September 1996, long before the Georgian 'Rose Revolution' (Iskandaryan 2005). An attempt to remove the government through peaceful mass protests took place in Armenia in the immediate aftermath of the 'Rose Revolution' in spring 2004. Therefore, we believe that the Armenian case is an important one from the point of view of study of 'colour revolutions'.

The interpretations of 'colour revolutions'that have been offered so far can roughly be divided into two groups. One explanatory paradigm, which can be termed 'geo-political', views the 'colour revolutions' as a part of a grand geo-political struggle between major powers, namely 'the West' and Russia, or in some cases, the US and Russia, for domination on the post-socialist space. This paradigm is more often used in the political discourse and in mass media than in academic literature. In certain cases, depending on the context and sympathies of the authors, this 'grand struggle' can be viewed either as a struggle for liberty and democracy against the 'post-imperialist' ambitions of Russia, or as a manifestation of the 'neo-imperialist aspirations' of the West. Another approach, which can be called 'internal' or 'systemic', views the 'colour revolution' as a consequence of certain features of the political system and political culture, which are present in the so-called transitional societies. The first explanation reflects to a certain degree the reality that both the West and Russia have in many cases influenced the developments that have lead to 'colour revolutions' (or their absence). However, the second paradigm is more productive since it captures the profound causes of the 'colour revolutions'. As the Armenian case shows, the emergence of conditions

that contain potential of a 'colour revolution' is a consequence of certain features of the political system that exists in some post-Soviet states.

The Internal Context

The political system that makes countries particularly likely to experience 'a colour revolution' combines a democratic façade, including a formally democratic legal and institutional framework, with authoritarian mechanisms of decision-making and elite recruitment. Researchers who studied the phenomenon of 'colour revolutions' have highlighted how certain features of this system might create opportunities for 'colour revolutions'. Thus, Tucker explains how disputable elections in some post-Soviet states provide a favourable condition for collective actions, which might eventually lead to a revolutionary overthrow of the regime (Tucker 2007). Hale examines how one of the components of the post-Soviet political system, which he labels 'paternalistic presidentialism', increases the possibility of a successful 'colour revolution' in certain situations, particularly when the incumbent president is not running for office, which might lead to a schism and defection within the ranks in the ruling elite (Hale 2005: 133–65). An analysis of the features of the post-Soviet political system that lead to the emergence of political crises similar to colour revolutions would be outside of the scope of this paper. However, our perspective on the events in Armenia is based on the assumption that there is an inherent connection between the peculiarities of the post-Soviet political system and the emergence of the pattern of 'colour revolutions'.

The political system that exists in Armenia can be described as 'imitated democracy' (terms like 'managed democracy' or 'controlled democracy' might also be used). In this system, formally democratic institutions exist, and the civil rights and liberties of the population are formally respected. However, important resources, which can be used by the opponents of the ruling elite to challenge its political domination, are controlled by the elite itself. Among such resources are the mass media, particularly television, which can be either state-run or controlled by private businesses, close to the ruling elite. Another important resource that is under the control of the government is the management of financial flows: ruling elite controls the funding of political forces and through different leverages (e.g. excessive tax checks in the companies belonging to businessmen who support the 'wrong' parties) prevents business owners from funding opposition organizations, in case they present serious challenges for the government.

Arguably the most important feature of such system is the recruitment of the ruling elites through co-optation rather than through elections. The question of transition of power is solved through elite consensus, the result of which is legitimized through elections. In those cases when the elite consensus also corresponds to the general mood of the public and there are no serious challenges in the form of political opposition, elections go smoothly. However, when there is a strong opposition able to mobilize the protest electorate, the elections are highly disputed (1995, 1996, 1998, 2003, 2008). It might be difficult to assess to what extent each concrete election had been fraudulent; however, it is clear that within the system

of 'imitated democracy' elections do not perform the function that they normally have in a truly democratic system – the recruitment and rotation of ruling elites. Not a single election since 1991, when Armenia became an independent state, has lead to transition of power from dominant political elite to an opposition political force. In most cases, opposition does not recognize the results of the elections, which in some cases leads to social protests and political crises (especially in 1996, 2003/2004 and 2008). These crises are solved by different means, often including repression and violence.

Even though 'stability' is a central concept in the political discourse of pro-government politicians both in Armenia and other post-Soviet states, the political system described above is inherently and fundamentally unstable. This type of political system contains a vicious circle: elitist decision-making and lack of public participation lead to a low level of confidence towards the government, which leads to disputed elections and the disputed elections lead to social protests and political crises. These crises are solved through force and coercion, resulting in further alienation of the society, which in turn leads to further elite isolationism and elitist decision-making.

External Context

The external political context in which Armenia's political system is developing is shaped by an intertwining of such factors, as conflicted relations with some of its neighbours, a need to balance between major global powers the US and Russia, while at the same pursuing a European perspective, and finally, existence of a large and influential Diaspora.

Armenia is a country that faces serious challenges to its security. The most serious challenge is the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, an Armenian-populated region, which during the Soviet years used to have autonomous status within the Azerbaijani Soviet Republic. In the late Soviet years Karabakh Armenians, who complained of discrimination on the part of Azerbaijani authorities, demanded unification with Soviet Armenia. After the break-up of the USSR this region declared independence. Attempts by Azerbaijan to gain control over Nagorno-Karabakh through military means sparked an armed conflict, in which the forces of Karabakh Armenians, backed by the Republic of Armenia, fought against Azerbaijan. Since 1994 there has been a ceasefire and Nagorno-Karabakh has been de facto sovereign, with close links to Armenia. However, Azerbaijan considers Nagorno-Karabakh a part of its territory and periodically threatens to opt for a military solution to the problem, which would unequivocally lead to a full-scale war. Besides, Azerbaijan continues the blockade of the transportation routes leading to Armenia, which started even before the USSR collapsed in the late 1980s. The blockade, the situation of no war/no peace on the border with Azerbaijan and the constant threat of military conflict have an enormous influence on the internal political developments in Armenia.

Another major external factor that contributes to the peculiarity of Armenia's situation is the state of Armenia's relations with Turkey. These relations are

poisoned by the historical legacy of events that occurred almost a century ago. During World War I, Armenians in the Ottoman Empire became victims of what is often considered the first genocide of the twentieth century – mass slaughter and deportations, that wiped out almost the entire Armenian population of the Ottoman empire. The Turkish government refuses to recognize that these events constituted an act of genocide, while Armenian communities around the world are campaigning for an international recognition of the events of 1915 as genocide. Other factors that complicate Armenian-Turkish relations are the Turkish support for their ethnic kin in Azerbaijan and the closed border between the two countries (in 1993 Turkey sealed the Armenian-Turkish border for transportation of goods and persons, in response to developments in Nagorno-Karabakh). The strained Armenian-Turkish relations have far-reaching consequences both for Armenia and for the whole South Caucasus. The fact that Turkey refuses to establish diplomatic relations and keeps the border closed provides a fertile ground for Armenia's insecurities. The fear of repeating the fate of Greek Cypriots after the Turkish intervention in 1974 has pushed Armenia into the arms of Russia.

Given the strained situation in Armenian-Turkish relations and Turkey's unequivocal support for Azerbaijan, the dramatic power asymmetry between Turkey and Armenia creates an immense security dilemma for Armenia, which Armenia tries to solve through military cooperation with Russia. Since 1992 a Russian military base has been situated in Armenia, close to the Armenian-Turkish border, and the Armenian border continues to be patrolled by Russian military forces. Armenia is part of the Russian-dominated Organization of the Collective Security Treaty. In recent decades the influence of Russia in security issues has been coupled with economic domination. Russian companies dominate strategic economy areas such as energy sector and communication.

However, the view of Armenia as a mere Russian satellite ignores the complexity of the Armenian situation. Armenia also has close links with the West. Armenia has been a member of the Council of Europe since 2001. Together with other states of the South Caucasus, it has been included in the 'European Neighborhood Program' of the European Union. Armenia has been cooperating with NATO and Armenian peacekeepers serve in Kosovo as part of the NATO peacekeeping force (NATO 24 February 2009). A group of Armenian military specialists served in Iraq as part of the international forces from 2005 to 2008, and as recently as 2009, the opportunity for sending Armenian soldiers to Afghanistan has been discussed (Harutyunyan 23 July 2009).

The foreign policy of Armenia since independence has been dominated by the question of finding a balance between strategic partnership with Russia and Armenia's European aspirations. The answer to this challenge came in the form of the doctrine of 'complimentary foreign policy', according to which Armenia should avoid picking sides in the newly emerging geopolitical competition. According to this paradigm Armenia needs to develop an equally productive relation with all the major powers in the region. It could be argued that there is a consensus among the Armenian political elites and counter-elites that both partnership with Russia and cooperation with the West are equally important for Armenia's security and development.

One of the factors that has allowed Armenia to pursue the 'complimentary' paradigm is the factor of the Armenian diaspora. There are populous and influential communities in many countries of the world. There is no agreement about the number of ethnic Armenians living outside Armenia, but according to different estimates the number of Armenians in the world varies from 7 to 10 million, with only 3.5 million of them residing in Armenia proper. Naturally, the existence of the diaspora influences internal political process in Armenia. However, the degree, to which the diaspora is able to influence internal Armenian politics should not be exaggerated. Numerous, often rival, organizations and groups exist within the Armenian diaspora, which means that it does not present a unified voice when it comes to Armenia's politics. Moreover, with some exceptions, the majority of diaspora organizations and groups have focused either on issues of foreign policy, such as genocide recognition and Armenian-Turkish relations, or on the issue of improving Armenia's social and economic conditions. Matters of internal politics, especially issues of democratization and human rights, have not been a priority on the agenda of influential organizations in the Armenian diaspora.

Political Processes in Armenia before 2003

Though the phenomenon of 'colour revolutions' had undeniable influence on Armenia's political developments in 2004, it has to be taken into account that Armenian society has had its own experience of regime change, brought about by mass protests. Moreover, this, which dates back to the late Soviet years, has become an important part of what can be called 'the foundation myth' of the modern Armenian state.

In 1988 Yerevan became one of the first sites within the countries of the Eastern Block where hundreds of thousands of protesters openly challenged the Soviet authorities. Some Armenian politicians and intellectuals talk of the events of 1988–91 as 'a national-democratic revolution'. The protests are known as 'the Karabakh movement', since they were triggered by the demands for reunion with the Armenians of Karabakh. However, as these demands were ignored by the Communist leadership, the political programme of the protesters became much wider, including a range of issues from environmental protection to democratization and secession from the USSR. While communist leadership of Armenia was losing its legitimacy among the population, the Soviet government cracked down on the protests, arresting the leaders of the movement and introducing a state of emergency in Yerevan. These repressive measures, as well as the destructive earthquake of 1988, which claimed thousands of lives, resulted in a temporary halt of protests (Malkasian 1996).

However, as the Soviet leadership's grip on power was being challenged in different parts of the Soviet Union, the communist rule in Armenia was doomed. The opposition party Armenian National Movement (ANM) gained majority in the parliamentary elections of 1990, thus ending the monopoly of the Communist Party on power. Ironically, this election, which took place when Armenia was formally still part of the USSR, was the only election in the history of modern

Armenia that brought an opposition party to power. The new government, led by the ANM, declared national independence and democracy for Armenia as its goals. Armenia declared independence in September 1991. The first presidential elections in Armenia's history also took place in 1991 and ANM's leader Levon Ter-Petrosyan gained a landslide victory. The elections of 1991 were the only presidential elections in Armenia, in which the results were not challenged by the opposition: all the subsequent presidential elections have been marred by claims of vote rigging (in 1996, 1998, 2003 and 2008).

The Karabakh movement, which united different segments of the Armenian society in the struggle against Soviet rule, and which combined elements of both a nationalist movement and struggle for democracy, is looked upon as a defining historical episode by almost all political forces in Armenia, from liberals to extreme nationalists. Therefore, it is not surprising that the mass movement of 1988–91 is the prototype that all mass movements that have taken place in Armenia since 1991 have been trying to emulate.

The years following the break-up of the USSR showed that overthrowing a totalitarian regime proved to be an easier task than building a sustainable democracy. While neighboring Georgia and Azerbaijan were going through internal chaos, which eventually led to the return of old Soviet leaders, Armenia managed to maintain a degree of stability throughout this period. However, this stability came at a cost. In spite of the democratic rhetoric, the ruling elite were gravitating towards an increasingly authoritarian style of government.

The parliamentary elections of 1995 were marred by numerous violations, which, as the opposition claimed, completely altered the results. The elections of 1995 were a prelude to the political crisis, which followed after the disputed presidential elections of 1996. According to the official results, incumbent Levon Ter-Petrosyan received 51.75 per cent of the votes, while his main rival Vazgen Manukyan got 41.29 per cent. International observers' assessment regarding the elections was quite harsh: they noted frequent 'breaches of the law' and suggested that 'the results of the first round of balloting could even be questioned until a thorough review and assessment of the irregularities and discrepancies is conducted' (OSCE ODIHR Election Observation Mission 24 September 1996). The opposition refused to accept the official results and its supporters took on to the streets. After several days of peaceful rallies, the protesters marched to the building of the National Assembly, where the Central Electoral Committee resided, to demand a recount of the votes. Some of the protesters broke through police lines and entered the building. The head of the National Assembly and his deputy were beaten up in the process. The government interpreted this as an attempt to seize a government building, and the rally was dispersed by the riot police. There were no victims in the clashes, but dozens of opposition leaders and activists were detained and some went into hiding (the majority of detainees were released soon afterwards).[1]

The events in Armenia in 1996 went largely unnoticed both for international media and academic community. However, these events are important not only in terms of understanding the subsequent political developments in Armenia, but also for grasping certain trends of development of the post-Soviet political system,

including the phenomenon of 'color revolutions'. The post-election developments in Armenia in 1996 followed a pattern usually associated with 'the colour revolutions': opposition's consolidation in the context of elections, large-scale electoral violations, opposition's claim of being the real winner of the election, mass protests and an attempt at overthrowing the government. The events of 1996 proved to be a pattern that in the years to come repeated itself in different post-socialist countries, albeit though with different outcomes.

The events of 1996 remain a disputed topic till this day. Some of Ter-Petrosyan's supporters concede that there were violations, but they argue that the extent of these violations was exaggerated by the opposition. In any case, the events of September 1996 dealt a serious blow to the legitimacy of Ter-Petrosyan as a president. He found it increasingly difficult to deal with the alienation of society and lack of public trust. In the wake of the events of 1996, internal struggles within the ruling elite eventually lead to a situation in which Ter-Petrosyan was forced to resign in 1998 under the pressure of some of the closest members of his own team, including the influential Minister of Defence, Vazgen Sargsyan, Prime Minister Robert Kocharyan, and the Minister of Interior and National Security Serzh Sargsyan (no relation to Vazgen Sargsyan). After his resignation, Ter-Petrosyan disappeared from the political scene for almost a decade (he returned to politics in 2007 as a leader of the opposition).[2]

Prime Minister Kocharyan became acting President. In the elections that followed in March 1998 (first round on 16 March, second round on 30 March) his main competitor was former communist leader Karen Demirchyan, who had led Armenia in the years prior to the movement of 1988. Kocharyan was declared the winner after the second round of voting, but his legitimacy was undermined by claims of election fraud. The OSCE observers assessed that the election did 'not meet the international standards, to which Armenia has committed itself' (OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission April 9 1998). However, unlike Manukyan in 1996, this time the losing candidate, Demirchyan, preferred to stay outside of 'revolutionary' methods of political struggle. Instead, he opted for a compromise with some members of the ruling elite, namely Minister of Defense Sargsyan. The coalition of parties lead by Sargsyan and Demirchyan scored a confident victory in the parliamentary elections in May 1999, which allowed Sargsyan to become prime minister and Demirchyan the head of the National Assembly. OSCE election monitors assessed the elections as 'a step towards compliance with OSCE Commitments'. However, the report stated that 'while improvements were made … serious issues still remain to be addressed and further improvements are necessary'. It also contained a telling reference to the previous elections – 'while the 1999 electoral process in Armenia generally showed an improvement over the flawed elections of 1995, 1996 and 1998, the previous elections are not an adequate basis for comparison' (OSCE ODIHR Election Observation Mission 31 July 1999).

It seemed that political stability was restored in Armenia. However, this illusion was shattered in a most dramatic way by a shocking terrorist act that took place in the Armenian parliament on 27 October 1999. A group of armed men entered the Armenian parliament and murdered Sargsyan, Demirchyan and several others.

Members of parliament were held hostage until the terrorists were convinced to surrender. The events of 27 October remain a topic of heated debates till this day, since many details of the killings remain unclear (e.g. how several well-armed men were able to penetrate the supposedly well-guarded building of parliament). The incident sparked a new round of undercover intra-elite struggles. Eventually the incumbent president Kocharyan was able to outplay his political rivals and establish full control over the state apparatus.

The Events of 2003–4

It is tempting to see the events of 2004 as a direct consequence of the Georgian 'Rose Revolution'. On the one hand, it is certainly true that the Rose Revolution inspired and emboldened the actions of the opposition in the spring of 2004. An important aspect of the Rose Revolution's influence on Armenia was the model learning process, which was theorized by Mark Beissinger, first with regard to the spread of nationalist protests in the Soviet Union in late 1980s (Beissinger 2002), and later applied to the 'colour revolutions' (Beissinger 2007). Unlike the opposition leaders in 1996, the opposition leaders in 2004 had an example to follow: they tried to imitate the tactics of the democratic opposition in Georgia. However, even though the Georgian events played a catalyzing role in the political crisis of spring 2004 in Armenia, these developments were essentially a continuation of a political process that started before the Georgian events. The first phase of the political crisis of 2003–4 started with disputed presidential elections in 2003.

In these elections the incumbent Kocharyan faced competition from several opposition figures. The most popular candidates were Stepan Demirchyan, son of the late Karen Demirchyan, and Artashes Geghamyan, a former mayor of Yerevan during the late-communist era. Both these candidates had little in common with the leaders of the Georgian opposition at the time. Stepan Demirchyan entered politics after his father's tragic death. His appeal to the voters was based almost exclusively on the fact that he was the son of a former leader, who had died in tragic circumstances. In spite of his virtual lack of political experience Stepan Demirchyan became the focus of hopes and aspirations of a large part of the electorate, which had previously voted for his father. If Karen Demirchyan's charisma derived to a large extent from the nostalgic feelings that many Armenians had towards the Soviet years, in the case of Stepan Demirchyan, support for him was bolstered by the tragic circumstances of his father's death. As some circumstances of the events of 27 October 1999 remained unclear, opposition leaders accused the government of failure to identify the forces behind the assassination, and hinted that the rulers themselves might have been involved in the conspiracy. The position of Stepan Demirchyan was further strengthened when he was joined by Aram Sargsyan, the brother of Prime Minister Vazgen Sargsyan, the other victim of the terrorist act. Thus, without any major effort, Demirchyan, in spite of a lack of experience in politics and a clear programme, became the most serious competitor to Kocharyan in the elections.

Artashes Geghamyan, the other opposition leader, who was expected to receive

a large number of votes, was even further removed from the image of a young, Western-oriented and liberal-minded reformer, which had become the trademark of the Georgian opposition leaders. Geghamyan, a former Communist Party boss, was able to count on the support of a section of voters who were nostalgic about the Soviet years and angry at the current authorities, but at the same were not ready to vote for Demirchyan. Both leaders lacked a concrete political programme or even a clear ideological orientation. Their rhetoric mixed harsh criticism of the current regime with populist promises of improving the material conditions of 'the common people'. However, in a country haunted by corruption and low living standards, this was enough to attract large masses of voters.

Even though the Armenian economy had been steadily growing since the mid-1990s, and there had been significant improvement in the living standards of some Armenians by 2003, the expectations of the majority of the population were far from being fulfilled. As the critiques of the government maintained, most benefits from the economic growth were concentrated in the hands of a tiny part of the population. Big businesses were controlled by a small number of so-called 'oligarchs', closely tied to figures in the government. Growth of the economy widened rather than reduced the gap between the reach and poor, as well as the gap between the capital Yerevan and provincial areas. Finally, the raging corruption, the omnipotence and inefficiency of the bureaucracy made sure that even those who were able to improve their material wellbeing to an extent, still had reasons to be dissatisfied with the quality of life in Armenia. Given these conditions, populist rhetoric and government-bashing were guaranteed to mobilize the protest vote around the opposition leaders.

The elections took place on 19 February 2003. The opposition complained of numerous irregularities, ranging from bribery of voters to open voting and manipulations in the process of the votes count. On the day following the elections Demirchyan's supporters took to the streets and demonstrated in front of the building where the Central Elections Committee was working (Eurasia Insight 20 February 2003). For some time it was not clear whether there would be a run-off. Finally, the Central Electoral Commission announced that two candidates, the incumbent Kocharyan (with 49.48 per cent of the votes) and Demirchyan (28.22 per cent of the votes) would continue the struggle for the president's post (OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission 28 April 2003: 23). Several opposition forces backed the candidacy of Demirchyan before the run-off. However, he never received the support he needed the most – that of Geghamyan who came in third in the first round. Contrary to the expectations of most opposition supporters, Geghamyan refused to support Demirchyan and called for a boycott of the second round of voting. In the aftermath of the election this lead to strong criticism of Geghamyan from other opposition figures, who accused Geghamyan's party of being 'a fifth column' of the government (Petrosian 25 April 2003). In the meantime pro-Demirchyan rallies continued in Yerevan, while the government responded by detaining some of the opposition activists (Human Rights Watch 2003).

According to the official results of the run-off that took place on 5 March

2003, Kocharyan won a decisive victory with 67.52 per cent of the vote, while Demirchyan received 32.48 per cent (OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission 28 April 2003: 23). The opposition dismissed these results as fraudulent. As in the first round, in the run-off opposition supporters cited numerous violations and claimed that vote rigging had occurred. The OSCE ODIHR monitoring mission stated that the 'elections fell short of international standards of democratic elections', that 'the overall process failed to provide equal conditions for the candidates', and sited 'serious irregularities' in voting, counting and tabulation, including 'widespread ballot box stuffing' (OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission 28 April 2003: 1).

The opposition was not going to accept the official results and called its supporters to protest against what it considered vote rigging (Danielyan 7 March 2003). Daily manifestations occurred in the center of Yerevan. The manifestations seemed to be gaining momentum, steering fears of a repetition of the scenario of 1996. The leaders of the opposition, however, insisted that their actions would be entirely peaceful and would remain within the limits of legality. According to opposition leaders, the manifestations were supposed to continue until the results of the elections were annulled. Two appeals were sent to the Constitutional court: Demirchyan demanded to nullify the results of the run-off, Geghamyan demanded to nullify the results of the first round of elections (Danielyan 7 March 2003).

The opposition leaders did not seem to have a clear plan of action. Repeated manifestations in central Yerevan seemed to have little impact on the developments. The international community did not pay much attention to events in Armenia. Even though the reaction of the West regarding the election was rather critical, it seemed that the West was not prepared to take on an active role in the Armenian events (Danielyan 7 March 2003; Vartanian 10 March 2003). Russia, on the contrary, unequivocally supported the incumbent. Russian President Vladimir Putin congratulated him immediately after the election (Vartanian 10 March 2003). The mission of election monitors of the CIS issued a positive statement, saying that the violations had not been massive and they had not influenced the outcome of the elections (Danielyan 7 March 2003).

In this situation the Constitutional Court pronounced a decision that on the one hand strengthened the government's position, and on the other hand allowed the opposition to retreat in a face-saving manner. The Constitutional Court decided to leave the elections results unchanged, but at the same time suggested holding a referendum of confidence to the newly elected president, as a measure of solving the political stand-off (Danielyan February 6 2004). In a situation in which the opposition supporters were already tired of constant manifestations that did not seem to achieve any results, this decision helped to dissolve the strain. Another factor that also helped to disperse the post-election crisis was the fact that parliamentary elections were to be held in May 2003.

The opposition pronounced the parliamentary elections a continuation of the struggle for reversal of the disputed presidential election. Candidates, who supported Demirchyan in the run-off and during the post-election manifestations, joined their forces, creating an electoral block called 'Ardarutyun' ('Justice').

Geghamyan's 'National Unity' participated in the elections separately. The elections that took place on 25 May 2003 followed a familiar pattern. The monitoring mission pronounced that the elections 'marked an improvement over the 2003 presidential election', but yet 'fell short of international standards of democratic elections in a number of key respects, in particular the number and tabulation of votes' (OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission 31 July 2003: 1). According to the official results, the pro-government parties won an absolute majority in the parliament; while opposition parties received only 24 seats out of 131: 'Justice' coalition received 15 seats, Geghamyan's 'National Unity' party only 9 seats (OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission 31 July 2003: 23). 'Justice', which predicted that it would win at least 44 seats, declared that the elections were fraudulent (Danielyan 27 May 2003; Tadevosyan and Ter-Sahakyan 30 May 2003).

This was the situation in Armenia, when the news of the Rose Revolution came from Georgia. The opposition, which had been demoralized by the results of parliamentary elections, was revitalized. As the subsequent events showed, the opposition, inspired by Georgian events, attempted to use the tactics of the Rose Revolution, such as mass protests, rallies, calls for the supporters to block government buildings and institutions, etc. However, since there were no elections scheduled in Armenia until 2007, the Georgian opposition's strategy of rallying the population using the pre-election campaign and then unseating the government through protests over a disputed election was impossible in Armenia. Therefore, the Armenian opposition was forced to build its strategy around the demand for a confidence referendum in the incumbent president. The opposition's strategy was based on the use of the recommendation made by the Constitutional Court regarding a referendum of confidence in the president.

One of the problems with this strategy was the reality that a legal framework for such a referendum was simply non-existent. The opposition first tried to use its presence in the parliament and proposed amendments to the law on referenda in order to make the confidence vote possible. This attempt was doomed to failure: the pro-government majority blocked all such efforts. At this point the opposition declared that legal means of achieving its end had been exhausted and therefore it was turning to peaceful mass protest actions in order to achieve its goal (Avetisyan 8 April 2004).

To understand the course of events in Armenia in 2004 it is important to realize that the ruling elites of post-Soviet countries also took important lessons from the Georgian revolution. Thus, in Armenia, the Rose Revolution had its impact not only on the determination and tactics of the opposition supporters, but also on the tactics of the government in dealing with the protests. The defeat of Eduard Shevardnadze was interpreted by many as a result of his excessively 'mild' approach to the protests, and his failure to crush the protests using the coercive agencies of the state. Violence and suppression had been used by the government agencies against protesters in several cases in 2003, but the state did not resort to major repressive operations. The events in 2004 took a different course.

In the research literature on 'colour revolutions' it has been noted that the consolidation of opposition forces is one of the most important pre-conditions for a

'colour revolution'. In Armenia in 2003, unwillingness of the opposition leaders to unite their forces was among the factors that contributed to the failure of post-election protests. In 2004 it seemed that Demirchyan and Geghamyan were finally able to put aside their differences and form a united front. On 5 April 2004 at a common press conference the two leaders announced that they were joining forces in order to reach the common goal – the ousting of Kocharyan – and announced the date of the first joint mass rally against Kocharyan – 9 April. In a joint statement the opposition leaders announced that their main demand was to hold a referendum of confidence, proposed by the Constitutional Court. The opposition leaders also threatened to launch a nationwide campaign of civil disobedience in case the government did not meet this demand (Danielyan 6 April 2004).

A rally was convened on 9 April, the one-year anniversary of Kocharyan's inauguration. The number of those attended varied, according to different estimates, from 10 to 25 thousand (Karapetyan 15 April 2004). This was the beginning of a series of protests, which in the view of the opposition leaders, would have led to the toppling of the government. On 12 April 2004, after a massive rally on the Liberty Square in the center of Yerevan, the opposition supporters marched towards the building of the National Assembly and the Presidential Palace. Reports put the number of protesters at about 10–15,000 (Eurasia Insight 13 April 2004). The security forces prevented the protesters from approaching the president's palace, which was blocked by barbwire. After that some of the protesters (according to the reports about 2,000 people) stopped near the building of the National Assembly, with the intention to hold a 24-hour picket in front of the building (Karapetyan 15 April 2004). As in Georgia several months earlier, the protesters were dancing and singing, trying in every way to emphasize the peaceful character of the protest. However, the picket had sealed off one of the major streets of the capital, which gave the authorities a formal pretext to use force against the protesters.

During the night the gathering was dispersed by special police units. According to some reports, the police operation, which started at 2 am, was carried out in quite a brutal fashion: protesters were beaten indiscriminately and some of the journalists present also became victims of police beating. The police, in a statement released the next day, justified the violence with allegations that the protesters had attacked first and that the police were forced to take action. The break-up of the protests was followed by a campaign aimed at opposition supporters. On 13 April the police raided the offices of several opposition parties and opposition newspapers (Eurasia Insight 13 April 2004; Karapetyan 15 April 2004).

Numerous opposition activists were detained with different charges: the number of detainees varied from 115 (according to the police report) to 250 (according to opposition sources). The detainees included ordinary activists and several well-known opposition figures, including three members of the National Assembly. The majority of the detainees were released soon afterwards; however, some of them remained in custody, and were tried in court on charges such as 'participation in mass disorder' and 'resistance to law enforcement officials' (Karapetyan 15 April 2004). The police crackdown on 12 April effectively ended the opposition's political campaign for a referendum of confidence. Even though the rhetoric of the

opposition leaders remained harsh, no major attempts of mass protests followed. Many opposition supporters had been disappointed by what they perceived as passivity and lack of determination on the part of their leaders.

The events of 12 April generated an active response within the Armenian non-governmental organization sector. During the elections of 2003, as well as before 2004, the Armenian civil society showed little sympathy for the opposition forces. At large they were perceived as populists who had little commitment to democracy and human rights. However, the violent suppression of protests on 12 April, which was followed by serious human rights violations, lead many NGO activists to believe that action was needed. Several NGOs, as well as individuals involved in human rights activism, held protests against human rights violations committed during the suppression of the opposition movement. Several days after the break-up of protests, a forum of NGOs was held, in which a coalition of NGOs was created to voice the concern about human rights abuses. Some of the participants of these actions talked of the necessity to establish an 'Armenian civil rights movement', which would not be affiliated with any political force (Ishkhanyan and Babajanyan 2004: 101–3). The NGO activists carried out several small rallies in Yerevan, assisted jailed opposition activists and tried to publicize the trials against opposition activists. Some of the NGO activists had been harassed by the police and two activists who distributed leaflets were actually charged in court with 'hooliganism' (they were sentenced to a symbolic fine; Ishkhanyan and Babajanyan 2004: 76–79). However, these actions did not find resonance with the wider public. Eventually, after the majority of opposition activists had been released, this movement faded away (Ishkhanyan and Babajanyan 2004: 103).

The events of April 2004, as well as the preceding post-election developments of 2003, have rarely been described as an 'attempted colour revolution'. The opposition supporters themselves avoided the term, in order to discard accusations of being 'agents of outside forces'. The government also avoided explicit references to the Georgian revolution, among other things, in order not to spoil relations with the new leadership of Georgia. However, these events possess some of the essential characteristics of a 'colour revolution', such as the context of disputed elections, unification of opposition forces and attempt to topple the government through peaceful protests.

Conclusion

The failure of the opposition's campaign in spring 2004 can be to a large extent attributed to the internal weakness of the opposition, which failed to present a viable and realistic alternative to the governing political elite. The opposition lacked not only a clear programme of actions and a clear programme of the development of the country, but even a more or less clear political or ideological orientation. Its leaders were not able to present a credible and clear vision of the direction in which they would have taken the country in the case of their victory. The populist rhetoric of the opposition, which exploited the frustrations of the materially least well-off part of the population and nostalgic feelings about the Soviet past, was guaranteed

to attract a large number of votes among the poorer and older voters. However, this kind of rhetoric was not suitable to win the sympathies of the potentially more active strata such as youth, intellectuals and the emerging middle class. As a result, those social groups, such as students and young professionals, that were among the driving forces of 'the colour revolutions' in Georgia and Ukraine were mostly either indifferent to the opposition's claims or supported the existing government as a guarantor of a certain degree of stability.

External conditions were also unfavorable for attempts to change the government through mass protests. Kocharyan's government was perceived as a relatively reliable and predictable partner both by Russia and the West. After the Georgian Rose Revolution, Russia was not prepared to allow regime change in any other post-Soviet country, especially in Armenia, which was considered a strategic partner. At the same time, the Armenian government clearly indicated its willingness to cooperate with the West, therefore, the Western governments and organizations did not have an incentive to go beyond relatively mild criticism of election violations and human rights abuses.

The attitude of the West to the events in Armenia was also conditioned by the fact that the Armenian opposition leaders in 2003–4 had very little in common with the image of the 'pro-Western, liberal opposition' that is usually associated with the 'colour revolutions'. As was mentioned, two of the most influential leaders of the opposition, Demirchyan and Geghamyan, had obvious connections to the Soviet past. Their rhetoric focused on issues of social welfare rather than issues of human rights or democracy. None of the opposition leaders had a critical view of Russia's overwhelming influence in Armenia: on the contrary, some of the opposition supporters accused the regime of 'flirting with the West' at the expense of relations with Russia. Russia, however, openly and unequivocally supported the ruling elite, which lead to a certain change of attitudes towards Russia among some of the opposition supporters.[3]

The most obvious loser in the 2003–4 developments was the opposition. The inability of the opposition leaders to sustain the political struggle after the events of 12 April 2004 sealed the fate of the political forces that took part in the events of 2003–4. In the parliamentary elections of 2007, none of the opposition forces that took an active role in the events of 2003–4 was able to surpass the 5 per cent limit required in order to be represented in the parliament. In the years following 2004, some of these political forces eventually disintegrated, others turned to cooperation with the ruling elites, and some of the opposition leaders of 2004 joined new opposition formats. Events of 2003–4 proved that pseudo-leftist populist rhetoric, which tried to exploit nostalgic feelings about the Soviet past, was well-suited for attracting votes of a large part of the population, but was not fit for mobilizing masses in a social-political movement of the type that occurred in some of other post-Soviet countries.

However, it would also be difficult to state that the ruling elite benefitted from the events of 2003–4. Even though the ruling elite emerged as a winner, the bases of its power were seriously undermined. These events clearly showed that the ruling elite had no other resource for maintaining its position than coercion and

violence, and it was dramatically losing its legitimacy in the eyes of the majority of population, a process that would continue in the years to come. As an Armenian political analyst wrote immediately after the events 'The government … will only get weaker as long as it equates political strength with the capacity to bash opposition demonstrators over the head with truncheons' (Iskandaryan 28 April 2004). This interpretation of events was echoed by another commentator, who noted that 'by resorting swiftly to force and coercion, the Armenian leadership has contributed to the cycle of violence and 'arrogance of power' that can only bolster the opposition in the long run' (Giragosian 14 April 2004).

These warnings were largely ignored by the ruling elite, which considered itself to be the unambiguous winner of the standoff. For some time it seemed that the positions of the ruling elite were as secure as ever. Armenia retained its peculiar political system, in which the ruling elite successfully controlled both the political and economic life of the country, in spite of a low level of legitimacy, thanks to the weakness of the opposition and the political indifference of a large part of the population. These factors helped to maintain a democratic façade, while the style of actual government was leaning towards authoritarianism. It seemed that this model was quite effective for a country like Armenia, since it allowed a degree of individual freedom, while guaranteeing stability.

This illusion was shattered by the events of 2008, which proved to be the deepest political crisis in the history of post-Soviet Armenia, surpassing even the turbulent 1990s. Disputed elections, day-and-night rallies, and the subsequent violent crackdown rocked the foundations of the Armenian society.[4] These events are outside the time span and the scope of this paper, but it has to be noted that the roots of the tragedy of 2008 go back to the government's handling of the crisis of 2003–4 and its aftermath. By failing to address the apparent weaknesses of the political system that manifested themselves in the crisis of 2004, the Armenian political elites paved the way for the explosion of 2008.

What does the Armenian experience suggest for the research on 'colour revolutions' in general? Even though Armenia never had its own 'colour revolution', political crises, structurally similar to 'colour revolutions' tend to take place in Armenia with a notable permanence. Such crises tend to occur because of the population's lack of trust in the elections, which are marred by irregularities and violations and fail to provide government change. In such a political system every state election tends to be a potential political crisis, given the existence of a large enough opposition force that is willing to take chances of challenging the government through mass protests. In this context it does not matter who the opposition leaders are and what ideology they represent: as the Armenian case shows, not only pro-western liberals, but also social populists and even former Soviet bureaucrats are able to become leaders of mass protests.

The Armenian case also shows that rivalry between the West and Russia cannot be considered the main cause of the political crises that might lead to 'colour revolutions'. The post-election crisis of 1996 occurred at a time, when relations between the West and Russia were largely constructive and the West was not trying to challenge Russian influence in the post-Soviet space. During the second crisis in

2003–4 there were no indications of western support for opposition protests. The political mindset of a part of opposition was pro-Russian rather than pro-Western. While international community's increased attention and involvement might be instrumental for the success of 'a colour revolution', it certainly cannot be considered a necessary pre-condition for emergence of a political crisis, in which an attempt of 'colour revolution' may be made.

The most important lesson to be drawn from the Armenian experience is that the system of 'managed democracy' is not sustainable, since it contains an inherent contradiction between the democratic façade and essentially authoritarian mechanisms of decision-making. Such a system is likely to develop in one of two directions. One possible development is that the political system gravitates towards an openly authoritarian regime, a development that we have witnessed in some of the post-Soviet states. This is a path that strives to ensure stability at the expense of pluralism and liberty. This might be the preferred outcome for some members of the ruling elites in Armenia, who tend to equate 'stability' with maintaining their grip on power, but it can prove disastrous for the country in the long run. Armenia, however, still seems to have a chance of taking the other path, that of creation of functioning democratic institutions and mechanisms of decision-making, which will ensure the formation of a genuinely stable and efficient political system. Whether this will be the direction that Armenia finally chooses depends on the wisdom of its political leaders and on the courage and determination of its citizens.

Notes

1 On the elections of 1995 and 1996 and the subsequent political crisis see Astourian 2000: 43–46; Human Rights Watch 1997.
2 For a detailed discussion of the transfer of power from Ter-Petrosyan to Kocharyan see Astourian, 2000: 52–58.
3 During one of the post-elections rallies in 2003, the protesters shouted 'shame' when passing by the embassy of Russia, and expressed their appreciation as they marched to the embassy of the USA (Vartanian March 10, 2003). On the Russian position vis-à-vis the stand-off in Armenia see Skakov 2005: 150–51.
4 In the presidential elections of February 19 2008 the official results awarded victory to the incumbent prime-minister Serzh Sargsyan, whose candidacy was supported by out-going Kocharyan. These results were challenged by the opposition, lead by Ter-Petrosyan, who had re-emerged on the Armenian political scene after almost a decade's silence. The opposition held protests for ten days in central Yerevan, which were broken up by the police on March 1 2008. Subsequent clashes left 10 people dead (including 8 protesters) and dozens wounded. Dozens of opposition activists were jailed or went into hiding (Human Rights Watch 2009).

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7 Azerbaijan

Vicken Cheterian

Introduction

The Azerbaijani legislative election of 2005 was the theatre for Azerbaijani opposition activists to try and stage a non-violent revolution. This attempt came after a series of successful, non-violent 'electoral revolutions' in neighbouring countries, was repressed by the Azerbaijani authorities, and further marginalized the opposition of this Caspian, oil-rich country. This article will try to address the reasons why the colour revolution model failed to adapt to Azerbaijani realities, and will argue that the inspiration of the revolution-attempt was not nourished from local conditions but were by-and-large inspired by events outside the Azerbaijani society. The study of the attempt and failure of a colour revolution in Azerbaijan is instructive to understand the other cases of non-violent revolutions, and the necessary conditions to bring down a dictatorship through the mobilization of peaceful citizens.

One key aspect to study any successful or failed colour revolution is the delicate balance of power between the regime and its opposition. The Georgian and Ukrainian cases demonstrated that a typical mechanism of a colour revolution is to have important opposition movements capable of sustaining several-months' long mobilization and confrontation with the regime, to have part of the elite formerly associated with the regime defecting to the opposition and eventually leading them, and to have access to the media to spread their message and mobilize the population. Civil-society structures, or rather non-governmental organizations (NGOs), often with financial and organizational support from Western foundations, played a key role in mobilizing youth movements and students, the vanguard of the revolution. Lastly, foreign support to the opposition has equally played a key role, and not just by financing pro-opposition NGOs. In fact, the position of Western politicians and their envoys – underlining the importance of free and fair elections and threatening sanctions – was important in mobilizing the opposition, pushing hesitant leaders to make a last minute move to the other side, and dissuading the authorities from using force against peaceful demonstrations.[1]

Some of these elements did exist in Azerbaijan, from opposition parties to mass media and youth organizations. Otherwise, there would not have even been an attempt to peacefully overthrow the authorities. It is true that two ministers, Health Minister Ali Insanov and Economic Development Minister Fardhad Aliev (not related to the presidential family) were among a number of other officials dismissed

and then arrested on charges of attempting a coup.[2] These events revealed that Ilham Aliev's hold on power was not yet consolidated, and an inter-elite struggle was on the horizon. Yet, as we will see later, no bigger schism emerged within the ruling elite, nor was the head of the state more isolated from various power circles than in Azerbaijan and Azerbaijani society, and there could therefore have been a peaceful revolution. However, to the contrary, the October 2005 events consolidated Azerbaijan's ruling elite and the young and (relatively) new leader Ilham Aliev. In fact, the Azerbaijani opposition and those activist groups unhappy with the Aliev dynasty had chosen the timing of their revolution badly: it was over two years late.[3] The critical moment, when power had passed from Heydar Aliev the father to Ilham Aliev the son was in October 2003, the moment when potential rivals from within the regime could have expressed discord, and the time when the opposition could have had a better chance at destabilizing the ruling regime, and eventually overthrowing it peacefully. Instead, they decided to act in the context of parliamentary elections of the 6 November 2005. Both the timing and the strategy were badly chosen. Moreover, as we shall see, the balance of forces was not in favour of the Azerbaijani opposition.

The Aliev Dynasty

The 2005 Azerbaijani parliamentary elections took place with fresh memories of popular non-violent revolutions in Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004), and Kyrgyzstan (2005).[4] There were high expectations that the wave of popular revolutions would continue, sweeping away autocratic, corrupt and undemocratic regimes, like that in Azerbaijan. A new generation of post-Soviet citizens wanted a greater voice in decision-making processes, more than the system was ready to relinquish. Azerbaijan had massive social problems, which could fuel mass protests: in spite of its legendary oil wealth, and according to official statistics, in the year 2005 more than 40 per cent of the population lived below the official poverty line, put at US$41.2 per month; the minimum wage in Azerbaijan amounted to 125,000 manats (about US$30) and the average wage to 500,000 manats (slightly more than US$100s).[5] Another possible source of instability was the perception of rampant corruption; according to Transparency International, Azerbaijan was ranked as the 137th most corrupt nation out of a 159-nation index (with 159 being the most corrupt, and 1 the least corrupt, or most transparent), and the official election campaign promised to eradicate both poverty and corruption.[6]

Yet, Ilham Aliev seemed confident that his country was not on the brink of yet another colour revolution, never fearing that his regime could be overthrown. When a journalist asked him whether a revolution was possible in Azerbaijan, he answered 'absolutely not', adding that 'every nation has its own history'.[7] And the history of modern Azerbaijan is closely associated with that of the Aliev family. Heydar Aliev dominated modern Azerbaijani history not only in the post-independence period, but also in Soviet times. For most of the past four decades, the Alievs have ruled Azerbaijan and shaped its politics. Heydar Aliev, a former KGB officer, was appointed first secretary of the Azerbaijani Communist Party

in 1969. In 1982 he became a member of the Soviet politburo. The coming of Mikhail Gorbachev to power and his attempt to dismantle the influence of national nomenklatura factions that were often deeply rooted in bureaucratic corruption and economic inefficiency led to the marginalization of Heydar Aliev, but also to a period of political turmoil in Azerbaijan, as well as in the rest of the Soviet Union. He was forced by Gorbachev to retire in 1987, during attempts under perestroika to reform the corrupt Brezhnevite administrations in the Soviet republics. But the reforms brought only instability, plus a territorial conflict with neighbouring Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh region. This mountainous area is located entirely within Azerbaijan, but its population is (and was during the past century) mainly Armenian. A bitter power struggle in Baku between the local nomenklatura and the rising Popular Front of Azerbaijan (PFA) added to the problems.

Following the independence of Azerbaijan and coming to power of the Popular Front led by Abulfaz Elchibey, Aliev moved to Nakhichevan where he developed his power base. Long discounted as a political corps, Aliev showed remarkable political skill when he used the opportunity of an armed rebellion led by an former lieutenant of Elchibey, Surat Husseinov, to return to Baku and by way of solving the crisis and saving the country from a civil war, he retook power in his own hands. This was 1993, and Azerbaijan was not an enviable place to be. The economy of the country was in ruins, oil production in free fall, a war with ethnic Armenians in mountainous Karabakh was disastrously managed, the army was in ruins and armed militias were proliferating. Aliev brought back to power his old nomenklatura cadres; he first reorganized the army and launched massive though aimless attacks on the battlefronts before he signed a ceasefire with Karabakh Armenians. He then violently suppressed various armed groups, and signed oil contracts worth billions of dollars. This last act, the signing of the 'deal of the century', a US$8 billion contract with Western oil companies, brought Azerbaijan to the attention of global players. It also framed the context in which Azerbaijan's relations with the West were based: multinational investments in the Azerbaijani oil industry, and therefore a strong incentive to support stability rather than political reforms in Azerbaijan.[8]

Yet, the rule of Heydar Aliev was not a smooth ride; he was not only criticized by opposition parties, but also had rebellions within his own ranks. He was conscious that the conflict over Nagorno Karabakh was the major problem facing the next generation of Azerbaijanis. Aliev was also conscious that as leader of modern Azerbaijan, he had the legitimacy to negotiate and reach a deal with Yerevan. After long negotiations with his Armenian counterpart Robert Kocharyan, the two leaders were close to signing a peace agreement, but when Heydar Aliev returned from Key West to Baku in April 2001 he found that his close collaborators opposed the deal, believing that Azerbaijan was making too many concessions, namely giving up Mountainous Karabakh.[9] For the next two years, Aliev concentrated his efforts on one thing: preparing his son for leading Azerbaijan. More than by any other factor, modern Azerbaijani political culture was constructed by the skills, character and shortcomings of Heydar Aliev. Since his death in 2003, Heydar Aliev has been the object of a personality cult. His portraits appear everywhere next to those

of his son. He is referred to in speeches and documents as the founder of modern Azerbaijan and the father of its institutions. When a group of academics working on the Azerbaijani National Encyclopaedia made the mistake of describing the 1970s as a period of stagnation and rampant corruption, they were invited to the office of Ilham Aliev, rebuked and told to go back and revise the entry.[10]

When Heydar Aliev started thinking about preparing his succession, his choice fell on his son Ilham, but at the time few people took the young Aliev seriously.[11] The international media referred to him as lacking sufficient political experience to take over a country as complex and dangerous as Azerbaijan. Though he had an International Relations degree from the prestigious Moscow State Institute for International Relations (MGIMO), Aliev had the reputation of enjoying his life as the son of a rich and influential Soviet nomenklatura leader – a lifestyle associated with gambling and attractive women. After Heydar Aliev retook power in Baku in 1993, Ilham returned to become deputy director of the Azerbaijani State Oil Company of Azerbaijan (SOCAR). He also became a member of the Milli Mejlis (the Azerbaijani parliament) and head of the national Olympic association. Yet it was clear that Ilham Aliev lacked political experience. Many observers doubted his ability to govern Azerbaijan and preserve its recent stability.

Curiously, both Heydar Aliev and Ilham were candidates for the presidency. Heydar Aliev, 80 years old and suffering, did not appear much during the election campaign. In August 2003, that is two months prior to the elections, he nominated his son Ilham to the post of prime minister; in case of any aggravation of Heydar's health his son would have assumed the state leadership. On October 2, under treatment for heart failure in a hospital in Cleveland, Heydar Aliev withdrew from the election race, leaving Ilham the only official candidate of the ruling elite. This transfer of power within the Aliev family reflected a larger consensus: it reflected the agreement of key branches of the ruling cast in Azerbaijan to such a transfer of power, and a choice for stability and continuity instead of political uncertainty. In spite of harsh criticism from the OSCE Election Observation Mission Report, qualifying the election process to have 'failed to meet OSCE commitments and other international standards for democratic elections,[12] underlying pre-election intimidation and post-election violence and repression, no practical steps were followed by either international organizations or the West. The message was clear: the West preferred stability rather than democratization in Azerbaijan.

The lack of critical international reaction to the establishment of a dynasty in Azerbaijan reflected the success of Heydar Aliev in transforming the image of his country in the international arena from that of a repressive, nationalistic regime lacking democratic credentials, to an oil rich country where regime stability counted more than democratic experimentation for its near and far partners (Rasizade 2004). It also reflected a certain cohesion within the ruling elite, and the strengthening of the repressive apparatus. Note that in both Georgia and Kyrgyzstan, there was a deep division among the ruling elites, while the police forces were weak, often unpaid, and demoralized, and therefore unreliable in conditions of popular mobilization against their regimes. This was not the case in Azerbaijan. It is interesting to note that no major division appeared within the

Azerbaijani ruling elite, unlike during the Baku-Yerevan negotiations to find a solution to the Karabakh conflict. The Azerbaijani elite supported the succession of power from the older Aliev to the younger, and the establishment of the first dynasty in a post-Soviet republic.

The succession was made good in the presidential elections of October 2003, in which Ilham Aliev defeated the opposition candidate, Isa Gambar. Official results gave 76 per cent of the vote to Ilham Aliev and only 14 per cent to Gambar. Violence erupted following the announcement of the results, as the opposition accused the authorities of massive fraud. For nearly a month Isa Gambar was kept in house arrest, and a number of opposition activists were arrested. Although the authorities were clearly responsible for using democratic mechanisms for the establishment of dynastic rule, the opposition is also responsible for failing to unite in such a critical moment in Azerbaijani history. In spite of the fact that a number of opposition candidates emerged from the pro-independence movement in the late 1980s, such as Isa Gambar (Yeni Musavat), Kerim Kerimli (Azerbaijani Popular Front) and Etibar Mamadov (Azerbaijani National Independence Party), initially failed to unite behind a single opposition candidate, and dispersed their forces. They agreed to join forces in the second tour behind the figure of Isa Gambar (Ismailzade 2003; Freizer 2003).

Yet the inexperienced Ilham, who lacked a social base of his own, had to rely on his father's powerful advisers, who were engaged in open power struggles among themselves. As colour revolutions spread across post-Soviet countries (the Rose Revolution in Georgia, then the Orange Revolution in Ukraine), it was thought that some in Azerbaijan's ruling elite might defect to the opposition. Two years after the younger Aliev came to power; his allies and followers swept the board in parliamentary elections in November 2005. By then he was already well established as the uncontested ruler of Azerbaijan. Only 11 seats out of 125 in the Milli Majlis, the Azerbaijani parliament, went to opposition parties. The rest were divided between the ruling party, Yeni Azerbaijan (New Azerbaijan), and 'independent' representatives thought to be close to the regime. The opposition and Western observers made complaints to little effect, as Yeni Azerbaijan enjoyed full control of the state apparatus, and had the blessing of observers from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (International Crisis Group 2005).

A Divided and Weak Opposition

As the examples of Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan illustrate, a popular non-violent revolution can take place as sections of the ruling elite move to the opposition, and by joining forces with other dissident groups lead a popular uprising. The regime should be largely isolated from the population, contested by sections of the elite, pressed hard by the international community, and confronted by an organized opposition so that it surrenders power without resistance. In other words, to allow a non-violent colour revolution, the balance of power should be in favour of the opposition facing a discredited, illegitimate regime. So, the question here is what was the state of the Azerbaijani opposition in the year 2005?

There were two wings of the Azerbaijani opposition that could have provided leadership in the potential 'velvet revolution'. One would have come from the traditional Azerbaijani 'national-democratic' leadership. An alternative leadership would have come from Azerbaijani party nomenklatura disgruntled with the Aliev dynasty. As it turned out, both were weak and divided, and unable to mobilize.

A number of authors who feel close to the Azerbaijani opposition tend to describe them as 'democratic'; they also consider the period of Abulfaz Elchibey's rule as a period of 'transition from Soviet regime to democracy', which came to termination with the coup that brought Heydar Aliev to power (Gahramanova 2005: 783). The 13month long rule of Elchibey is better described as chaos, mismanagement, and following initial victories in the war front, a disastrous defeat and loss of large territories. In such a context, the Azerbaijani Popular Front did not have the capacity to carry out reforms that could be described as 'democratic transition', and consequently, it is difficult to accuse the Heydar Aliev administration of stopping those reforms. It is rather the negative memories of the Elchibey period, its failures and shortcomings, and the incapacity of the Azerbaijani opposition to distance itself from it by proposing new leaders, that played a role in perpetuating the Aliev regime(s).

Let us start first with party nomenklatura elements that had gone to the opposition. There were a number of nomenklatura figures who detested the Aliev clan, and would have liked to lead a rebellion against them. One such personality was Ayaz Mutalibov, the president of Azerbaijan when the country gained independence. In 1993, Mutalibov was overthrown when military defeats on the Karabakh front strengthened the nationalist opposition, and Abulfaz Elchibey came to power. But Mutalibov, who had been living in Moscow, had lost touch with the Azerbaijani reality and did not constitute a real force.[13] Another such figure was Rasul Guliyev, an Azerbaijani Communist Party cadre, who had made a career in the oil industry, becoming deputy director of the state oil company SOCAR in 1992. Guliyev was nominated deputy prime minister when Heydar Aliev returned to power, and later speaker of the parliament. He was considered to be the second most powerful person in Azerbaijan, and reputed to be immensely wealthy. In 1996, he suddenly resigned from the post 'for health reasons' and went into exile in the US. Yet, he did not hide his political ambitions, as he founded the Azerbaijani Reform Party in 1997, which later merged with the Azerbaijani Democratic Party, with Guliyev as its chairman. The Baku authorities accused him of corruption, of having appropriated over US$100 million, and harassed his relatives and collaborators who had stayed in Azerbaijan. In spite of this, Guliyev was considered the most serious challenge to Aliev family rule in the 1990s, and he enjoyed support among some officials in Washington and Ankara, whosaw him as a suitable pro-Western successor to the ailing Aliev. The Aliev family, along with many other key figures, is either from Nakhichevan – the disconnected region of Azerbaijan between Armenia and Iran – or from Armenia. They are nicknamed the 'Nakhichevan clan'. Guliyev himself originated from Nakhichevan and is a member of the Nakhichevan clan, a fact that could guarantee regime stability and ensure that no major elite change would take place once he assumed the presidency.

On 17 October 2005, after spending nine years in exile, Rasul Guliyev tried to return to Baku to participate in the November parliamentary elections. According to some media reports, Guliyev was 'sent' by Washington with the hope of starting a 'velvet revolution' there.[14] But after his plane landed in Simferopol, the capital of Crimea, he was arrested by Ukrainian police because of an Interpol warrant under the demand of the Azerbaijani authorities. He was released a few days later. In the meantime, it became clear that if Guliyev continued his trip to Azerbaijan, he would be arrested immediately after landing in Baku.[15] This was accompanied by arrests within the administration of people who could have been in touch with Guliyev envoys, like Insanov and Aliev, mentioned above.[16] The failure of Guliyev to show up at Baku airport, and the arrests, seems to have solidified the often squabbling Azerbaijani ruling elite.

With the elimination of the danger of a major split within the ruling elite, opposition leadership could only come from without. The major opposition groups had formed a bloc named Azadliq, ('freedom'), which included supporters of the Azerbaijan Democratic Party of Rasul Guliyev, the Azerbaijan Popular Front Party (APF) and Musavat (Equality) Party. The Popular Front and Musavat had been in power for a short 13 months in 1992–3. Isa Gambar, the leader of Musavat, had been the acting president (19 May 1992–16 June 1993) during a short and turbulent period following the resignation of Mutalibov and until the election of Abulfaz Elchibey, the leader of the Popular Front, as president of Azerbaijan. To understand the weakness of the Azerbaijani opposition, and therefore why a revolution could not happen in Azerbaijan, it is useful to look at the period when the opposition leaders exercised power themselves, and the legacy they left behind.

Abulfaz Elchibey was an orientalist and a former dissident who was elected to power in June 1992. Under the APF, Azerbaijan suffered recession, mismanagement, and mass unemployment. Elchibey reoriented Azerbaijani foreign policy away from Moscow, developing closer relations with Turkey. He also made declarations about the unification of north and south Azerbaijan with 'South Azerbaijan', consisting of three provinces in the northwest of Iran, which has an Azeri-speaking population of some 12 million. Unsurprisingly, the unification policy caused much anxiety in Tehran (Hunter 1993). The APF period also saw the worsening of the Karabakh war. Azerbaijani armies were successful at first, occupying the northern quarter of Karabakh, but their subsequent defeat caused chaos in Baku. The memory of those chaotic years, the collapse of the economy, military defeat, and the incapacity to organize the national army and rule over the Soviet era bureaucracy, all these failures continue to have a negative influence over the image of the leaders associated with that period.

The most important is that the opposition – in spite of its efforts – did not succeed to mobilize large crowds either before or after the elections. In one of its larger the opposition gathered some 15,000 people.[17] On October 1, the Popular Front called for a demonstration for 'free and fair elections', which gathered some 700 people who eventually clashed with police forces.[18] When the Azerbaijani opposition called to protest electoral fraud, they hoped some 50,000 people would gather; instead, only around 15,000 showed up,[19] a number similar to the pre-election

mobilization. As dissent remained limited and isolated, the authorities did not have much difficulty dispersing them by force.

Repression Before the Election

Both in Ukraine and in Georgia, assassination of prominent investigative journalists, presumably by contract killers close to the centres of power, sparked the beginning of anti-regime mobilization. In Ukraine, the disappearance of Georgiy Gongadze, the editor of *Ukrayinsk Pravda*, and later the discovery of his decapitated body, that created shockwaves. Probably the authors of the crime intended to intimidate journalists and activists, but the result was the opposite: they ignited the first anti-Kuchma mass movement. Similarly, in Georgia it was the assassination of Giorgi Sanaya from Rustavi 2 television that triggered mobilization against the authorities. In Azerbaijan a wave of repression started before the elections, and the victim was Elmar Huseynov, a leading Azerbaijani journalist and the most gifted in a generation.

Unlike in Ukraine and Georgia, the assassination of Elmar Huseynov on 2 March 2005, was not countered by challenge and mobilization. Rather, the murder created an atmosphere of fear and subjugation. Huseynov was a well-known journalist, probably the sharpest pen in modern Azerbaijan, whose audacious writings and piercing criticism of the ruling elite had subjected him already to a series of court cases, and the closing down of his newspapers *Monitor* and the *Bakinski Boulevard*. He came under regular pressure from the authorities, including facing charges of insulting the honour of the president, and Baku printing facilities refused to print his publications. His difficult professional conditions made him describe his work as 'guerrilla warfare' rather than journalism.[20] He was shot dead in the entrance of his home with seven bullets,. Although the authorities opened an investigation, relatives and colleagues of Elmar Huseynov doubt that the police were seriously trying to find the culprits (Ognianova 2008). Continuous harassment and beatings of journalists associated with opposition publications continued the pressure on dissident media until – and after – the elections. It should be noted that in Azerbaijan, similar to most post-Soviet states, all electronic media with mass appeal are controlled directly by government or through proxy by people close to the ruling circle, and only a small number of low circulation print publications are associated with the opposition, in the absence of any independent-minded mainstream media.

Next, the authorities hit at youth movements close to opposition circles, which had the potential to mobilize students in a post-electoral struggle. In August 2005 the Azerbaijani authorities distributed videos that seemed to show a youth movement leader, Ruslan Bashirli, receiving cash from Armenian intelligence officers. Bashirli was a leader of Yeni Fikir (New Thought) youth movement, which was close to the Azerbaijan Popular Front Party opposition movement. Bashirli was personally close with Popular Front leader Ali Kerimli. According to official reports, on the recommendation of Kerimli, Bashirli travelled to Tbilisi in July 2005, where he met with Armenian security agents. These agents allegedly passed a sum of US$2,000 to support a coup in Azerbaijan, promising an additional

US$20,000. These were accompanied by official accusations that Bashirli had backing from the Washington-based National Democratic Institute for International Affairs to launch a revolution in Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani media commentators made links between the arrest of Bashirli and attempts by the authorities to undermine Kerimli, one of the leading figures of the opposition (Fuller 2005). These accusations prepared the ground to arrest a number of opposition-linked youth activists, and disturb their efforts.

Yeni Fikir, Yox ('No'), Magam ('It's time') and similar Azerbaijani youth movements were small clubs of politicized youth, who did not have the social roots of the original organizations they were trying to copy: Otpor, Pora and *Kmara*. The Serbian Otpor, before participating in the October 2000 revolution, had several years of mobilization experience going back to the university students' mobilization against electoral fraud going back to 1996. In a similar way, Pora emerged from mass mobilization known as 'Ukraine without Kuchma', which started in late 2000, and mobilized thousands of activists during 2001. *Kmara* activists had their first mobilization in October 2001 in defence of Rustavi 2, a pro-opposition television company. In Azerbaijan, the divided youth movements were established a few months into the November 2005 elections. They did not reflect social movements and political struggles within the Azerbaijani society; they were the pale reflection of the youth organizations of the original copies of Orange and Rose revolutions.

Fraud, Oil and Bases

The OSCE final report on the 2005 elections was not flattering: while observing a number of 'positive developments' in the pre-electoral period, the report notes that massive irregularities were noted during the vote count and tabulation: 'A wide range of serious violations were observed during the vote count at the polling stations (in 41 per cent of counts observed) and during the tabulation of results at constituency election commissions (ConECs) (in 34 per cent of ConECs visited).'[21] Other observers underlined the positive side of the coin, underlining that the 2005 elections were 'a step forward' and adding: 'These parliamentary elections were by far the most orderly and inclusive in the country's independent history.'[22] Nevertheless, this progress, like the entire enterprise of transition, is not enough to bring Azerbaijan and countries sharing its fate away from a vicious cycle of authoritarian rule and fake elections, and repression of critical media. The regime simply does not tolerate political competition, and will not tolerate putting its political control into question by elections.

In cases where colour revolutions were successful, the international dimension played an important role. This dimension – that is Western support for regime change – is often misunderstood: it is not US and EU money and directives which played a key role in making the revolutions happen, but rather their political position that framed the political course: to reject massive fraud and bloody police repression in case of post-election mass demonstrations. The political message coming from the West emboldened the opposition in Serbia,[23] Georgia and Ukraine, and made the authorities think twice before using force to suppress

opposition mobilization. This hesitance led to defections from the camp of the ruling circles, isolating the rulers, and therefore further strengthening the opposition. In the case of Azerbaijan, there was no international pressure that threatened the authorities with sanctions in case of massive electoral fraud. In neighbouring Georgia, in July 2003 (that is four months before the November elections) James Baker, who is a former US secretary of state and a 'personal friend' of Eduard Shevardnadze, visited Tbilisi as a special US presidential envoy to warn against fraudulent elections, and to express his opinion on such details as the composition of the Central Electoral Commission, or suggesting that Shevardnadze should not be personally involved in the campaign.[24] No high ranking American or European official visited Baku pointing their fingers and threatening against mass fraud. Nor were Azerbaijani activists sent to camps in Serbia to learn the revolutionary techniques from Otpor – as was the case with Georgian and Ukrainian youth.

Azerbaijan is in a completely different geographic unit compared to neighbouring Georgia and Ukraine. It belonged to the east and the south, to Central Asia and the Middle East, a space where instead of 'democratization', 'transition' and 'transparent elections' other key words are used, such as 'oil interests', 'fight against terror', 'Islamic threat', etc. In the summer and autumn of 2005, Western leaders had those issues in mind when it came to Azerbaijan. In July 2005 the US lost its strategic air base in Uzbekistan (the Karshi Khanad base) as relations between Washington and Tashkent deteriorated. As a result, the Pentagon needed to replace it with new bases in the region, and Azerbaijan was one possible alternative. The cooperation of Baku was also necessary in case of US strikes against Iranian nuclear facilities, which at the time was one of the options discussed by American leaders.

Even more important is the Azerbaijani oil interests. In May 2005 the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline was inaugurated, pumping oil from offshore oil fields to Western markets. It took six months to fill the 1,770 km pipeline, whose construction cost some US$4 billion. The pipeline was to pump a million barrels of oil a day by 2008. It was calculated that even if the price of oil were to fall to US$45 a barrel, this would bring returns as high as US$160 billion by 2030, a huge amount considering that the country's entire budget for 2005 was only US$2 billion.[25] Along with a weak opposition and a loyal apparatus, Ilham Aliev could rely on increasing income from oil. A crucial question, then, is how does the oil factor interfere in the democratization process – or lack of it? How does the oil income strengthen the hands of the authorities, or sharpen opposition criticism? The fact that the revolutionary attempt occurred in 2005, and not earlier, could suggest a link between hopes aroused by the realization of the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline, and frustration by certain segments of the population that they were not benefiting from this income. Yet, frustrated people who were ready for action did not represent the critical mass that could have helped the opposition forces. At that moment in fact, the oil factor served the authority's cause: in spite of endemic corruption and an inefficient public administration, the Azerbaijani public believed then that eventually the oil income will trickle down and bring some change to their living standards. The oil income also helped the Azerbaijani president to reinforce his clientelist relations

with various sectors of the Azerbaijani regional elites, to buy their loyalty and in return, as well as social welfare programmes to gain a large popular support, further isolating the Baku-based, and intelligentsia-inspired opposition.

As oil started to flow, and in spite of much rhetoric, the main interest of Western countries with influence over Azerbaijan – namely the US and Britain – shifted from 'democratization' to 'stability'. After investing several billions for oil extraction and pipelines, the last thing London or Washington wanted to see was political turmoil in Azerbaijan. In the words of a leading London-based journal: 'The hope is that, as the oil travels south-west, stability will flow the other way along with the revenues.'[26] The lack of Western support was yet another blow to the Azerbaijani opposition. Moreover, many in Baku think that foreign oil companies are not indifferent towards internal political developments in Azerbaijan. According to one study, '[t]he ordinary Azerbaijani sees Western oil companies as part of Aliev's corrupt system and that they are thus helping to maintain that system' (Herdstveit 2001: 274). One could draw parallels here between Western policies towards Azerbaijan and Middle Eastern, oil-rich countries, where, in the same manner, the West supports stability rather than reform and democratization. Such policies have undermined the credibility of any democratic opposition, and opened the way for the growth of radical ideologies, the last species of which are the Salafi Jihadists. How will the Azerbaijani opposition evolve after the blow it received in 2005 and after it was abandoned by the West? This is a question that needs to be followed up in the future.

Democratization and the Territorial Question

Azerbaijan went through a traumatic ethno-territorial conflict during the collapse of the USSR and the emergence of independent Azerbaijan. Although a ceasefire has been in effect since May 1994, the Karabakh conflict continues to cast a long shadow on the political life of Azerbaijan and is shaping the development of its institutions.[27] Often the negative impact of ethno-territorial conflict on democratization processes is underplayed, separated from each other. There are numerous examples from the Caucasus and the Balkans that show the negative impact of the 'national question' on democratization, and how the internal democratic process can advance once liberated from the omnipresence and repression of the territorial issue and identity politics.

The conflict in Mountainous Karabakh was part of a larger struggle in post-Soviet Azerbaijan; it was a fight to define the nature of Azerbaijani identity. The Azerbaijani Popular Front, which came to power from mid-1992 to 1993, defined the national identity as 'Azeri Turk', putting it in the larger context of Turkic ethnic belonging, and closely associating Azerbaijan with Turkey. This re-definition of the post-independent identity of Azerbaijan not only clashed with the substantial Armenian population of the republic, but also created separatist sentiments among Lezgins in the north and Talish in the south, not to mention serious frictions with the Islamic Republic, which is home to a substantial ethnic Azeri population. Following the coming to power of Heydar Aliev, there was a reformulation of

the national identity, reminiscent of the Soviet-era definition: rooting the national identity in geographic unity rather than an ethnic aspect – hence 'Azerbaijani' rather than 'Azeri Turk'.[28] The rebellion of Karabakh Armenians challenged the geography-based modern Azerbaijani identity, making this rebellion even more painful than a simple territorial conflict.

The territorial question is also present to different degrees in the other cases of successful colour revolutions, and especially in Serbia and Georgia. Serbia had just come out of a destructive war against NATO over Kosovo, and lost it. In part, the October 2000 revolution in Serbia was conditioned by Milošević's defeat in his last war. In Georgia in 2003 the territorial questions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia were not on the agenda. Neither the authorities nor the opposition used these issues for propaganda purposes. The Rose Revolution was about corruption and the failed state of Shevardnadze. It was only after the Rose Revolution, and within the project of reinforcing the Georgian statehood, that the reunification of the Georgian territories was put back on the political agenda.

The Azerbaijani authorities skillfully used the territorial question as part of their campaign in 2005. The authorities increased their militaristic declarations and underlined the need to reinforce the Azerbaijani army, in case of to the need to initiate a second Karabakh war to recover lost territories. Azerbaijan has dramatically increased its military spending, from US$175 million in 2004 to US$300 million in 2005. Moreover, Ilham Aliev promised to double the defence budget to US$600 million in 2006, a figure equivalent to the entire state budget of Armenia.[29]After attempts to negotiate a peace agreement under Heydar Aliev, Baku has lately gone back to insisting on the principle of territorial integrity, and demanding the return of Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijani rule. The Karabakh Armenians, with support from the Armenian government in Yerevan, insist on the principle of self-determination. There is almost no contact between the two countries, though their respective foreign ministers do meet occasionally. Baku insists that if it does not get what it wants through diplomatic means, it will again seek a military solution. Territorial questions, such as those in Azerbaijan, have been an additional obstacle to democratization, by permitting militarization of the society, and repressing dissent in the name of the national cause. It is only by reducing the importance of the territorial question that democratization and internal reforms become possible.

Conclusion

Why did the attempt of a peaceful regime change fail in Azerbaijan in 2005? The answer lies in the balance of power between the authorities and the opposition. Colour revolutions are possible because of large popular coalition that brings together traditional opposition parties, as well as parts of the ruling elite that mobilize in order to overthrow despotic and unpopular regimes. In order to be able to bring together such a mobilization, the moment needs to be well-chosen, such as following mass fraud at a key election. The opposition should also be credible, by showing unity, and proposing a leader that could unite often competing opposition forces.

When looking at Azerbaijan in 2005, we have a number of elements of colour revolution as it happened in previous successful cases in Serbia, Georgia and Ukraine. We have fraudulent parliamentary elections, followed by the opposition calling for mass demonstrations. Opposition mobilization did not take a massive form and it was quickly broken up by the police. Following a number of successful colour revolutions – in Georgia in 2003, Ukraine in 2004 and Kyrgyzstan in 2005 – the failure in Azerbaijan raised many eyebrows. The Azerbaijani opposition chose the moment of its colour revolution badly; it was late by two years. The most fragile moment for the Azerbaijani authorities was not the parliamentary elections of 2005, but the presidential elections of 2003, when the ailing Heydar Aliev, who spent more time in clinics abroad, was trying to install his son at the head of the state. It was the best moment to count on elite defection, as well as broader social sectors. 2005 was also the year when the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline was inaugurated, and Azerbaijan started pumping oil to the international markets. This fact increased expectancies of cashflow into the Azerbaijani economy, and many would have preferred to wait and see the impact of the petrodollars on their living conditions, rather than risk it with a revolution. The elite were solidly behind its new leader, the police officers received their salaries and even a raise, and there was no international pressure concerning free and transparent elections. Azerbaijan's international partners preferred stability over change and revolution. The Azerbaijani opposition was left to its own resources to face the regime.

The opposition did not have many resources. Its leaders dated from the time of the Azerbaijani Popular Front rule of 1992–3; they were leaders that brought back bad memories of the past, rather than projecting the dream of a better future. The youth organizations close to the opposition parties were set up three to four months prior to the elections, and did not have organizational experience. They were small clubs of enthusiastic students, but they did not represent a revolutionary force.

The Azerbaijani opposition timidly prepared for a colour revolution based on enthusiasm, and under the influence of the Georgian and Ukrainian successes, rather than as a result of their reading of the changing fortunes of the Azerbaijani internal political life. It could not but fail.

Notes

1 There is a rich debate on the nature and mechanisms of colour revolutions. See Valerie J. Bunce and Sharon L. Wolchik, 'Favorable Conditions and Electoral Revolutions', Journal of Democracy, Vol. 17, No. 4, (2006), pages 5–18; Joshua A. Tucker, 'Enough! Electoral Fraud, Collective Action Problems, and Post-Communist Colored Revolutions', *Perspectives on Politics*, 5(3) (2007): 535–51; Mark R. Beissinger, 'Promoting Democracy: Is Exporting Revolution a Constructive Strategy?' Dissent Magazine, Winter 2006, pages 84–89; Lucan Way, 'The Real Causes of the Color Revolutions', *Journal of Democracy*, 19(3) (2008):55–69.

2 See 'The two faces of Azerbaijan and its president', The Economist, November 7, 2005; and Nick Paton Walsh, "Azerbaijan ministers accused of coup plot", *The Guardian*, London, 21 October 2005.

3 One could compare the Azerbaijani case with the Armenian one, where the opposition launched mass demonstrations calling for the resignation of the President Robert

Kocharyan in March-April 2004 to contest irregular presidential elections of March 2003 …

4 There was some violence in Kyrgyzstan both during the making of the revolution, mainly in the southern city of Jelalabad where up to three people were killed in clashes, and looting followed the revolution in Bishkek. Still, violence remained limited in case one considers that there was a regime change under the pressure of street mobilization and the Tulip Revolution could be classified as 'non-violent'.

5 Sevinzh Abdullayeva and Viktor Shulman, 'Efforts against poverty-national task of Azerbaijan', Tass, May 12, 2005.

6 Ursula Hyzy, 'Oil billions and poverty in ex-Soviet Azerbaijan', Agence France Press, October 31, 2005; Aida Sultanova, 'Azerbaijan's president vows tougher fight against poverty, corruption', *Associated Press*, July 25, 2005.

7 Aida Sultanova, 'Azerbaijan's discontent unlikely to swell', *Associated Press*, Baku, 29 June 2005.

8 Raphaëlle Mathey, 'La stratégie politique américaine en Azerbaïdjan', *Hérodote*,129, 2008 : 123–43.

9 David Stern, 'US brokers peace talks on disputed Armenian enclave ', *Financial Times*, April 4, 2001; Movsun Mamedov, Oleg Maksimenko, 'Armenia and Azerbaijan Agreed', *Kommersant*, April 11, 2001.

10 See the day.az website, 9 April 2004.

11 Vicken Cheterian, 'Succession ouverte en Azerbaijan' Le Monde diplomatique, October 1999, www.monde-diplomatique.fr/1999/10/CHETERIAN/12539 accessed on 29 September 2009.

12 Republic of Azerbaijan, Presidential Election October 15 2003, OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Report', OSCE/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Warsaw, 12 November 2003, page 1: www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2003/11/1151_en.pdf accessed on 28 September 2009.

13 Ayaz Mutalibov joined the Social Democratic Party of Azerbaijan in 2003 as its co-chairman, in preparation for an eventual return and participation in the presidential elections. The other co-leader of the party was Ara Alizadeh.

14 'A 'Velvet Revolution ' Brewing in Azerbaijan?' *Stratfor*, October 19, 2005, www.stratfor.com/velvet_revolution_brewing_azerbaijan accessed on 20 October 2005.

15 Fatah Abdullayev and Mina Muradova, 'Azerbaijan: Still Waiting for Rasul Guliyev', *Eurasianet*, October 17, 2005, www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav101705.shtml accessed on 29 September 2009.

16 The two ex-ministers were accused for corruption and for preparing a coup d'état.

17 Khadija Ismayilova, 'Azerbaijani Opposition Comes Under Fire', *Eurasianet*, September 6, 2005, www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav090605.shtml accessed on 29 September 2009.

18 Mina Muradova and Rufat Abbasov, 'Opposition-Police Clashes Jar Azerbaijan Election Campaign', *Eurasianet*, October 3, 2005, www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav100305b.shtml accessed on 29 September 2009.

19 BBC News, 'Thousands Join Azerbaijan Protest', November 9, 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4420604.stm accessed on 29 September 2009.

20 See 'Profile: Elmar Huseynov', *BBC News*, March 3, 2005: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4315439.stm accessed on 18 October 2008.

21 Republic of Azerbaijan, Parliamentary Elections 6 November 2005, OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Report', OSCE/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Warsaw, 1 February 2006, page 3, www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2006/02/17923_en.pdf accessed on 30 September 2009.

22 Svante Cornell, 'Azerbaijan's Parliamentray Elections: A Step Forward', www.caei.com.ar/es/programas/cei/P08.pdf accessed on September 22, 2008.

23 Serbia is probably the only case where massive Western funds were sent to support the

opposition with the aim of getting rid of the Milošević regime. In the cases of Georgia and Ukraine, the basic funds for the revolutions were of local rather than foreign origin.

24 James Bakers' suggestions became known as the 'Baker plan'. See Charles H. Fairbanks Jr. 'Georgia's Rose Revolution', *Journal of Democracy*, April 2004, 12(2): 115; Giorgi Kandelaki, 'US Pressure Helps Achieve Breakthrough in Georgian Domestic Political Dispute', *Eurasianet*, July 17, 2003: www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav071803.shtml

25 Shahin Abbasov and Khadija Ismailova, 'Pipeline opening helps spur political opposition in Azerbaijan', *Eurasianet*, 6 June 2005, www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav060605.shtml accessed on 30 September 2009.

26 *The Economist*, 'The Oil Satrap', June 11, 2005.

27 For a detailed account of the emergence of the Karabakh conflict, see chapter 3 in Vicken Cheterian, *War and Peace in the Caucasus, Russia's Troubled Frontier*, Hurst, 2008, pp. 87–154.

28 The debate about the definition of the Azerbaijani political identity is not new, it dates back to the first decade of the 20th century. To illustrate, the Musavat party which would lead the first Azerbaijani independence and 'the main force of Azeri nationalism' in its first manifesto had framed itself as the defender of the umma, presenting itself as defender of pan-Islamic ideas, rather than Azeri nationalist or pan-Turkic current. See Tadeusz Swietachowski, *Russia and Azerbaijan: A Borderland in Transition*, Columbia University Press, 1995, p. 52.

29 Azer Tag, Baku, 20 December 2005.

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8 Belarus

Ustina Markus

On 19 March 2006, Belarus held a controversial presidential election. The incumbent, Alyaksandr Lukashenka, had had the country's constitution amended in a referendum in 2004, allowing him to run for the presidency indefinitely, in contravention to the constitution, which had set a two-term limit on any individual holding the presidency. That had evoked criticism in the country where the president's authoritarian style has led many to refer to Belarus as Europe's last dictatorship. In the wake of the colour revolutions in Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, the authorities in Belarus were alert to the potential for such a revolution unfolding in Belarus during the 2006 elections. Many of the ingredients that had contributed to the success of the other colour revolutions were present in Belarus. There was a vocal opposition to the president; there were a number of youth movements that were disgruntled with the system and highly active in organizing rallies against the authorities; there was contact between the opposition and parties critical of Lukashenka's regime in neighboring countries; there was support from the international community that demanded free and fair elections; and there was electoral fraud to ignite such a revolution. When President Lukashenka won the presidency outright in the first round of voting with 82.6 per cent of the vote, the opposition cried foul and a tent city was set up by the anti-Lukashenka youth movements in October Square in the center of Minsk. Protests continued until 25 March when riot police weighed in and broke up the demonstration, arresting its leaders, as well as opposition candidate Alyaksandr Kazulin.

In the aftermath of the attempted revolution it became apparent that the Belarusian opposition had not held out much hope of success. For all of the superficial similarities that Belarus's elections shared with the successful colour revolutions, there were some key differences that doomed the Belarusian revolution. While the peculiarities of Belarus are numerous, for simplicity they can be placed in five general categories. First, the level of political repression in Belarus was higher than in the countries that saw their colour revolutions succeed. Second, the independent media was much more obstructed in Belarus. Third, the opposition itself was not very cohesive, despite its attempt to unite behind a single candidate. Fourth, there was limited material support for the opposition. Fifth, Lukashenka does enjoy support in the country from various strata, making his victory inevitable from the start.

Lukashenka's Belarus

Belarus held its first presidential election in 1994. The leading political figure in the country at the time was Prime Minister Vyacheslav Kebich, who favored a close relationship with Russia. His main opponents were the former Chairman of the Supreme Soviet Stanislav Shushkevich, and the nationalist leader of the Belarusian Popular Front (BPF) Zyanon Paznyak. Surprisingly, rather than facing tough competition from Shushkevich or Paznyak, a little known parliamentary deputy with a reputation for roughness became Kebich's chief opponent. Alyaksandr Lukashenka outdid Kebich as the more pro-Russian of the two and won almost 50 per cent of the vote in the first round of voting. In the run-off he won by a landslide, carrying 80 per cent of the vote. Despite his gruff style and outspoken favouritism of Russia, the opposition – which made up roughly ten per cent of the parliament at the time – gave him a three month grace period before they began criticizing him over his policies. Nationalists worried that the president's pro-Russian orientation would undermine the country's sovereignty. By 1996 Lukashenka decided to deal with criticism over his policies by holding a referendum on increasing his powers. That led to massive demonstrations numbering in the tens of thousands. Nonetheless, 70 per cent approved the referendum on amending the constitution to increase the president's powers. Lukashenka then disbanded the parliament and reorganized it into a smaller, bi-cameral legislature with only deputies loyal to him obtaining seats. Only Russia recognized the new legislature (*Viasna* 1996).

From then on Belarus's history presents a long litany of laws restricting the country's independent media, legislation hindering the work of NGOs, the expulsion of foreign diplomats and NGO workers for conspiring against the regime, and arrests at demonstrations protesting Lukashenka's policies. The most chilling events were the disappearances of critics of Lukashenka in 1999 and 2000 who have not been heard from since. Former interior minister Yuri Zakharenka and the chairman of the unofficial, or shadow, opposition electoral commission, Viktar Hanchar, and his colleague Anatoly Krasovsky were allegedly abducted and executed by the Belarusian KGB. Both Zakharenka and Hanchar had been supporters of the president when he first assumed office, but soon became disillusioned with his policies. In 2000 a critical journalist, Dmitry Zavadsky, also disappeared. Two members of the elite Almaz special forces unit were tried and convicted of kidnapping him. Despite the convictions, Zavadsky's whereabouts remain unknown, and he is also believed to have been executed by Lukashenka's death squad (Human Rights Watch, 2003). Altogether, Lukashenka's rule has earned him the reputation as Europe's last dictator and tyrant.

Elections and Referendums

Since Lukashenka came to power in the country's only relatively clean election there have been a number of elections and referendums in Belarus, and all of them have been faulted by many observers for shortcomings that made them less than genuinely free and fair. In May 1995 parliamentary elections were held.

Lukashenka took advantage of the occasion to hold a referendum on giving the Russian language equal status with Belarusian and changing the country's flag and national symbols to those approximating its Soviet era symbols. More importantly, he asked whether people favored economic integration with Russia, and asked for the right to dissolve parliament if it violated the constitution. All of the questions were overwhelmingly supported by the public, with over 80 per cent backing economic integration with Russia and giving Russian the same status as Belarusian. The other two questions also garnered over 75 per cent of the vote. The referendum was denounced by a number of prominent politicians in the country as unconstitutional (*Zerkadlo nedeli* 27 May–2 June 1995).

The following year another referendum was held on amending the constitution and changing the country's Independence Day to the day Belarus was liberated from the Nazis in World War II. The referendum also asked whether the electorate approved the free sale of land, and whether they favoured the abolition of the death penalty. The vote overwhelmingly favored moving Independence Day to the day of the country's liberation in WW II, and over 70 per cent also voted in favor of Lukashenka's constitutional amendments. As for the free sale of land and abolition of the death penalty, those points were overwhelmingly voted down with over 80 per cent voting against those measures. The parliament had added three questions of its own. The first asked if people would accept an amended constitution. The second asked if people supported direct elections of local administrators, and the third called for financing all government organs from the state budget. All three were voted down. Critics charged that Lukashenka's proposed constitutional changes had not been put to the public in advance, so there had not been sufficient debate over the issues and people were not necessarily clear on what the constitutional changes would mean. Lukashenka's response was to dissolve the parliament, as allowed by his amended constitution, and restructure it into a two chambered legislature staffed only with his supporters (Markus 1996).

Elections were not held again until 2000, when a new parliament was elected. The OSCE criticized the election as falling short of international standards, and the parliament was largely viewed as a rubber-stamping body. The following year presidential elections were held. The opposition was well aware that it needed to unite and field a single candidate, rather than have every party field their own. Initially five candidates were under consideration: former prime minister, Mikheil Chyhir, former governor of Hrodna, Syamyon Domash, the chairman of the Federation of Labor Unions of Belarus, Uladzimir Hancharyk, the leader of the opposition communists, Syarhei Kalyakin, and former defence minister, Pavel Kazlouski. It was agreed they would all seek the requisite signatures to register, but rather than competing against each other they would throw their support behind the candidate with the best chances of success. Chyhir was prevented from running because the courts were investigating allegations against him for abuse of power while in office and the only two candidates that collected the required number of signatures were Domash and Hancharyk. Overall, the candidate with most support among the opposition was Domash, but support for Hancharyk was strong and divisions within the opposition quickly became apparent. The old guard Soviet nomenklatura

stood behind Hancharyk, while the liberals supported Domash. As the two sides bickered over who should run Domash withdrew from the race and the opposition nominated Hancharyk in his place. The fact that Hancharyk was nominated rather than elected by the opposition weakened support for him in the circles that preferred Domash. Apart from Hancharyk there were two other candidates – the incumbent president Alyaksandr Lukashenka, and Syarhei Haidukevich, leader of the Liberal-Democratic Party (*Belorusskaya delovaya gazeta* 26 July 2001).

The run-up to the election was marked by a clampdown on the country's independent media. The tax police raided the independent publisher, Magic Publishing House, on three occasions, seizing equipment and confiscating the print runs of independent papers. Magic Publishing printed most opposition newspapers in Belarus at the time. The youth group Young Front was denied registration and its leader, Pavel Syverinets, was fined for organizing a demonstration. Demonstrators were arrested in December 2000 and March 2001 and fined US$100 to US$500 as well as receiving 15-day sentences for their participation in the rallies – a standard sentence for such an offense. Members of the leading youth movement, Zubr (Bison), were regularly detained by police. In the end, Lukashenka won over 75 per cent of the vote; Hancharyk took just over 15 per cent; and Haydukevich managed just 2.5 per cent. Protestors demonstrated in Minsk against the conduct of elections, but the crowd never amounted to more than 2,000. The elections were criticized by the OSCE for a variety of shortcomings, including fraudulent vote counting (OSCE-ODIHR 2001).

Parliamentary elections were held again in 2004 and Lukashenka attached his latest referendum to the ballot. In a move more reminiscent of his Central Asian counterparts than his European colleagues, Lukashenka asked voters if they would allow him to run for the presidency again even though the constitution stipulated that an individual could only hold the office twice. Close to 80 per cent said yes. As for the elections themselves, no opposition candidate succeeded in being elected. Campaign spending for printed materials was capped at 975,000 Belarusian rubles (US$450), the amount provided by the state budget. Such a pittance severely hampered candidates in publicizing their platforms, but the opposition faced further hindrances, such as the refusal by both state-controlled and private printing facilities to print their materials. Again, the OSCE condemned the vote as neither free nor fair. The US adopted a stronger line and issued the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004, authorizing federal assistance to Belarusian political parties and NGOs, as well as support for media. The Act was tougher than the previous Act of 2002 and also banned loans and investment in the Belarusian government unless it was for humanitarian reasons. The EU adopted similar sanctions, barring leading Belarusian officials from entering EU countries and freezing accounts. Already highly isolated internationally, and not a magnet for foreign investment, neither the US Sanctions Act nor the EU sanctions had much affect on Lukashenka, apart from offering the country's weak political opposition and independent media some support (*Belorusskaya delovaya gazeta* 19 October 2004).

Presidential Elections in 2006

By the time of the 2006 presidential elections colour revolutions had succeeded in Georgia (2003) and Ukraine (2005). While Georgia's Rose Revolution had not evoked a particularly strong reaction from Minsk, the Orange Revolution next door was more worrisome, and it was noted that activists from the Georgian youth movement *Kmara* and the Ukrainian youth movement Pora were making their way into Belarus and working with Belarusian youth groups. That led authorities in Minsk to take precautions ahead of the vote to prevent any colour revolution there. In September 2005 Georgian *Kmara* members were deported from Belarus and the opposition press was feeling the pressure. As for the opposition politicians, even before the presidential election campaigning period began the authorities were taking steps to eliminate any real opposition threats. In December 2004 the former minister of foreign economic affairs and ambassador to Latvia, Mikheil Marinich, who had gone into opposition, was sentenced to three and a half years in jail, eliminating him from the race. A month after the elections, in April, Marinich was released. The elections themselves were scheduled four months ahead of time, which led the opposition to complain that that was done on purpose to give them less time to campaign and organize (Charter 97, March 2006).

In order to register as a candidate one had to collect at least 100,000 signatures within 30 days. Eight initiative groups collecting signatures for candidates registered, but only four candidates collected enough signatures to actually register for the elections – incumbent Alyaksandr Lukashenka, leader of the Liberal Democratic Party, Syarhei Haidukevich, leader of the Social Democratic Party, Alyaksandr Kazulin and the coalition opposition candidate, Alyaksandr Milinkevich. Campaigning began on 17 February and intimidation was felt almost immediately when the head of the KGB made statements associating the opposition and civil society NGOs with terrorism and intending to seize power violently. People were warned to watch out for the 'welfare' of their children – a warning aimed at having parents deter youth from becoming politically active on the side of the opposition. Kazulin himself was violently detained on 2 March when he tried to attend a government rally (*Belorusskaya delovaya gazeta* 7 March 2006).

In addition to the intimidation, opposition observers were almost wholly excluded from the election administration at all levels (OSCE March 2006). The Central Electoral Commission (CEC) was made of twelve members, with six appointed directly by the president and six elected by the Upper House of parliament. The chair of the CEC, Lydia Yarmoshyna, was noted for warning the opposition against using the internet for propaganda, as well as interpreting the campaign rules as saying that candidates needed permission from the city of Minsk to hold meetings (Charter 97 10 February 2006). The deputy chair of the CEC was a member of the presidential administration. Opposition parties were not to be found in the election administration. Out of 2,124 territorial electoral committee members only 56 were nominated by political parties, and 47 of those were from the pro-Lukashenka Communist Party of Belarus (not to be confused with the opposition Communist Party led by Kalyakin). It was noted that the chair

and deputy chair of the CEC took many decisions themselves outside of formal sessions (OSCE March 2006).

Candidates were not allowed to utilize their own funds in the campaign and could only use the state allocated US$31,000 to produce printed materials. At the same time Lukashenka launched a 'Za Belarus' (For Belarus) campaign featuring himself prominently on posters all over the country. The campaign was reminiscent of Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma's 'Buy Ukrainian' campaign when he ran for re-election in 1999. In both cases, while opposition candidates were limited in displaying their own posters, posters of the incumbents appeared everywhere, technically promoting their countries, but in reality they were campaign placards. Not coincidentally, after the elections the 'Za Belarus' campaign stopped just as suddenly as Kuchma's 'Buy Ukrainian Goods' campaign (Hestad 2006).

The independent media came under increased pressure. Both independent papers *Narodnaya Volya* and *Tovarish* had entire print runs seized and confiscated just before the election date (OSCE 2006). As for the state-controlled media, each candidate was allocated an equal amount of air-time, but the television station BTI would not broadcast any campaign addresses after 6 March, and censored parts of both Kazulin's and Milinkevich's broadcasts. Lukashenka received as much as 99 per cent of all electoral coverage on state radio and television, and the press ran his campaign material on the front pages while the oppositions' appeared in smaller print in pages within the papers (OSCE, 2006). The unfairness of the campaign organization led Milinkevich and Kazulin to declare their lack of confidence in the CEC on 17 March, just before the election, and request a postponement. That was not offered. Instead, on the following day, 30 of Milinkevich's authorized representatives were arrested, along with 100 other activists, while 80 supporters of Kazulin found themselves in detention. One of Kazulin's authorized representatives was even fined US$2,200 for holding a meeting with campaign workers in his own apartment (OSCE 2006).

The election itself was faulted by many international observers, although the CIS teams found them satisfactory. One of the faults most often cited was the large-scale early voting, which was not monitored and left plenty of room for electoral fraud. The boxes taken around for early voting days before the actual election were found to be unsealed and in some areas over 20 per cent or more of the registered voters apparently opted for early voting (Hestad 2006). As a result of the flaws in the election process large crowds of young people numbering as many as 20,000 turned out at October Square and erected a tent city just as the youth had done in Ukraine. The attempted colour revolution is sometimes referred to as the 'Jeans Revolution' because at an earlier demonstration in September 2005, police seized the old red and white Belarusian flags the opposition was waving, after which the leader of the youth movement Zubr, Mikita Sasim, hoisted his denim shirt in place of the flags, declaring that would be the protestors' banner (Charter 97 11 March 2006).

Milinkevich and Kazulin both addressed the crowds refusing to recognize the results of the voting. Having followed the successful revolutions in Serbia, Georgia and Ukraine, the youth adopted some of the counterparts' tactics. In particular it was noted that they sent mass text messages through mobile phone networks

spontaneously organizing rallies (*Belorusskaya delovaya gazeta* 22 March 2006). Although the police did not move immediately to dislodge the protestors, on 25 March they finally went in and demolished the tent city. During that action one protestor was killed, and around 100 detained (Belapan 25 March 2006). Thus ended Belarus's attempt at a colour revolution.

Political Repression

There were many reasons why Belarus's colour revolution did not succeed, but the most notable was the degree of political repression of individuals and civic organizations in the country, and the willingness to use force against demonstrators. Although some degree of political repression had been registered in many countries in the CIS – including the notorious case of Georgiy Gongadze, the journalist whose headless body was found in Ukraine during President Leonid Kuchma's tenure – Belarus had a much stronger record for political repression, vying with Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan as the worst of the CIS. In 1998 legislation was passed making any offense against the president punishable by up to five years imprisonment. That law has been invoked on numerous occasions in jailing critics. Belarus also has the highest per capita number of police in all of Europe to enforce its draconian legislation (*Time* 2007). Although Lukashenka and other Belarusian officials have been barred from travelling to Europe and the US, that has had little effect in curbing the country's repression.

The dangers of going into opposition to Lukashenka were best illustrated by the aforementioned disappearances of Viktar Hanchar, Yuri Zakharenka, Anatol Krasovskiy and Dzmitry Zavadskii. Credible evidence emerged in the form of testimony from a former Belarusian security agent that Hancharyk, Zakharenka and Krasovskiy had been executed by a special death squad. Evidence from the trial that convicted two security agents of kidnapping Zavedskii pointed to the same fate for the journalist, although the Belarusian authorities did not look into the case further. Others may not have been removed so thoroughly, but the list of political prisoners included many who dared challenge Lukashenka. Mikalai Statkievich, former leader of the opposition party Hramada and a contender for the 2001 presidency, was arrested in October 2004 and sentenced to three years of forced labor for his role in organizing protests during the referendum and elections. His term commenced in the summer of 2005.

Although the authorities promised not to arrest opposition candidates during the campaign period, in the run-up to the elections opposition supporters were often arrested. In February 2006 four observers from the NGO 'Partnership' found themselves under arrest and were handed sentences ranging from six months to two years in prison. Government officials also began making statements equating rallies criticizing the government with terrorism and attempts to undermine the state. Presidential contender Alyaksandr Kazulin was detained just before the elections on 2 March for attempting to hold an unsanctioned press conference. Under the circumstances, it was difficult for the opposition candidates to hold any type of rallies and campaign effectively. On 9 March, ten supporters of Milinkevich,

including his deputy campaign chief, were sentenced to 15 days in jail – just enough time to miss the election. The human rights NGO Viasna estimated that police arrested 236 opposition campaign workers in the campaign period and sentenced 90 per cent to 15 days in jail. During the five days of protests that followed the election, more than 700 were arrested (Viasna 27 March 2008). In the aftermath of the failed elections, Alyaksandr Kazulin was sentenced to five and a half years in prison for his role in the protests. Milinkevich was also jailed for 15 days for having participated in a rally in commemorating the Chernobyl disaster (Human Rights Watch 2007). Following the election the arrests did not stop. They extended to the leaders of the country's youth organizations along with opposition politicians. In September 2006 the leader of the Young Front, Zmister Dashkevich, was charged with running an unregistered organization (Human Rights Watch 2006).

Some hope appeared for the country's political prisoners in early 2008 when authorities began releasing them early. Dashkevich was released in January 2008 after serving 16 months of an 18 month sentence. A fellow Young Front leader, Artur Finkevich, also had his sentence shortened around the same time and was released. Another prisoner released early was Andrei Klimau, who was sentenced to two years in August 2007 for posting an article on the internet calling for a revolution. Klimau had been a parliamentary deputy in 1995 and 1996. He had already served four years in jail on charges of embezzlement in 1998, and in 2005 he was sentenced to 18 months of restricted freedom for organizing a demonstration (Amnesty International 3 April 2007). By March 2008 there was only one political prisoner left in the country – Alyaksandr Kazulin – who was serving a five and a half year term for leading an anti-government demonstration following the 2006 elections. Despite the upturn in Belarus's record of detaining individuals for their political activities, Lukashenka seemed reluctant to free Kazulin. The reluctance may have stemmed from Kazulin's campaign appearances on television where he revealed what had already been rumored for a long time – that Lukashenka had a mistress and a son with her. Kazulin was given three days to attend his wife's funeral in February 2008 after having staged a hunger strike, and he did state that he had been offered freedom to go abroad with his wife so her cancer could be treated – but only under the condition that the Kazulins never return to Belarus. The lenient treatment and reduced sentences were attributed to Lukashenka's desire to improve relations with the west, but without Kazulin's release Belarus remained under sanction so by April, Lukashenka was once again tossing protestors into jail and giving sentences ranging from 15 days to two years. Not until 16 August was Kazulin freed (Maksymiuk 28 May 2008).

NGOs have also been targeted in the country, making them less effective during the elections and post-election protests. There are approximately 2,500 NGOs registered in the country, but it had become increasingly difficult to register them. In 2005, just before the election, 68 NGOs were deregistered and out of the 1,284 registration applications received from NGOs, only 61 were successful. That same year the criminal code was amended to increase the penalty to up to two years in jail for participation in an unregistered organization (OSCE 2006). The Belarusian Helsinki Committee, founded in 1995, was the country's last human

rights NGO. The organization had heavy fines levied against it in December 2005 for not paying taxes on an EU grant, which legally should have been tax exempt. Following the election in May 2006 the Ministry of Justice asked the Supreme Court to order the Belarusian Helsinki Committee to suspend its activities. Then in December 2006 police seized the organization's office equipment, making it virtually impossible for it to work (Human Rights Watch 14 December 2006).

The overall effect of repressing individual politicians, supporters of the opposition and NGOs working for a more transparent and democratic state was to impede any effect they could have had during the voting and neutralize their authority. Such repression did not occur in Ukraine or Georgia to the same extent. There were political arrests in Kyrgyzstan during the 2000 presidential elections when presidential contender Felix Kulov was arrested and supporters of opposition candidates found themselves detained and NGO workers harassed. That ultimately contributed towards former Kyrgyz President Askar Akayev's downfall in 2005.

Media Obstruction

Along with the repression of politically active critics of the regime, the media was highly censured and legal obstacles made it difficult for the independent media to function in the country. In September 2005 the independent newspaper *Narodnaya Volya* had its publishing and distribution contracts voided and its assets frozen because of a libel case against it. Then in January 2006, prior to the elections in that month, the criminal code was amended, making statements that discredited Belarus or misrepresented the situation in the country a criminal offence. The new 'crime' was then quickly used to clamp down on the media. The leading independent newspaper, *Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta*, was refused distribution following a three-month suspension by the Ministry of Information. The leading independent news agency, Belapan, and the Belarusian Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) services were both ordered to vacate their offices (Bekkerman 2005). Following the elections, in April 2006, the independent newspaper *Nasha Niva* received a letter from the Minsk city authorities saying that its presence was not appropriate in the city and its address would not be recognized (Human Rights Watch 14 December 2006).

State control over the media went beyond printed materials and broadcasting. About ten per cent of the Belarusian public uses the internet regularly, and the number of occasional users is even higher. Most of that number are younger and better educated members of the population. Blogging and chat rooms have become a major source for information sharing and organizing rallies (Potocki and Vidanava 4 December 2007). That meant that the ever-watchful eye of the KGB would take steps to bring those outlets of expression under control, even after the elections. In August 2006 the KGB raided the homes of students who had been exchanging emails with cartoons parodying Lukashenka (*Time* 2007). In 2008 the authorities' actions became even more aggressive against internet users when eight sites operated by RFE/RL were knocked out by cyber-attacks in April. As many as 50,000 fake hits per second were registered (*The Wall Street Journal Europe*

29 April 2008). The cyber-attack took place after protests marking the anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster in April and affected sites such as the opposition Charter 97 and RFE/RL (Whitmore 29 April 2008).

While the media itself was pressured before the vote, even more disturbing were the suspicious deaths of two opposition journalists. In 2004 Veronika Cherkasova, who wrote for the independent *Soliodarnost*, was found murdered. The following year Vasil Hrodnikau, a journalist with *Narodnaya Volya*, was killed. In the case of Cherkasova the police detained her son for the killing, but ultimately released him for lack of evidence, and have closed the case. As for Hrodnikau's death, the police refused to even open an investigation (Amnesty International 7 March 2006).

As for the state controlled media, its reporting could hardly be viewed as objective. Following the opposition meeting in October 2005 to unite behind one common candidate, Belarusian state TV played footage of the event. Rather than simply reporting what had happened, the camera crews sent actors in clown suits to ambush the delegates at the meeting and portray them as supporters of gay marriages (Kudrytski 2005). Under such circumstances the public was not served with unbiased news coverage. The extent of that type of distortion and repression was not seen in the countries with successful colour revolutions, although in all of them the independent media was at times charged with libel and there had been cases of journalist intimidation, most notably the case of Georgiy Gongadze in Ukraine. Still, the harassment of the independent press was not as systematic as in Belarus and generally in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, the independent media operated without obstruction as long as they practised a degree of self-censorship.

A Divided Opposition

Matters were not helped by the fact that the opposition was not one strong united front. Well aware that they had split the opposition vote before, there was an attempt to unite around one common candidate. Some 800 members of the opposition met at the Palace of Culture in Minsk in October 2005. The fact that they were able to meet was something of a surprise since they had been turned down 55 times when they requested premises to hold their meeting, but on the 56th try they succeeded. Some speculated the premises were finally granted because Lukashenka decided they would show their weakness by not being able to agree on a common candidate. When they arrived at the Palace they found anti-opposition graffiti on the walls. The four potential challengers were Siarhei Kalyakin of the Communist Party, Stanislav Shushkevich, the former chairman of the Supreme Soviet until 1993, Anatol Lyabedzka, leader of the United Civic Party (UCP), and Alyaksandr Milinkevich, former deputy mayor of Hrodna. In the first round of voting Milinkevich won a bit less than the 50 per cent necessary to win with 383 votes. In the run-off against Lyabedzka, most of the votes for the other candidates went to the leader of the UCP, so that Milinkevich won by a narrow margin of 399 votes to Lyabedzka's 391. Although the opposition parties agreed to back Milinkevich, it was clear Lyabezka was unhappy with the result. Milinkevich was anxious to avoid a repeat of the 2001 elections, when those who had favoured

Syamyon Domash – the early opposition favorite – refused to work for Uladzimir Hancharyk after he won the oppositions' nomination. Therefore, he tried to engage the other contenders in the campaign from the start, asking Kalyakin to supervise it. Not all opposition parties joined the coalition. The Social Democratic Party (Hramada) leader, Alyaksandr Kazulin, decided to run himself rather than join the other opposition parties. Zyanon Paznyak, the former leader of the Belarusian Popular Front (BPF), who split off from that party and formed the Conservative Christian Party of the Belarusian Popular Front, also refused to join the coalition and vowed to run for the presidency himself, as he had done in past elections (Kudrytski 2005; Belapan 26 September 2005).

Just as the Belarusian Popular Front, the country's oldest party, founded in 1988, had split, there were strains within the Social Democratic Party (Hramada). In 2005 there had been dissent within the party that ended with the former leader Mikheil Statkievich being replaced in a feud by Kazulin. Statkievich refused to recognize his expulsion from the party and claimed leadership of a splinter group (Freedom House 2006). In the meantime, the Hramada had refused to join the coalition of opposition parties and siphoned votes by fielding Kazulin.

There were numerous youth movements active in the demonstrations following the 2006 election, including Zubr, Vesna, Limon, Young Hramada, the Young Front, the youth branch of the BPF, as well as several others. The Young Front (Malady Front) is the oldest of the movements and its members had been under intense pressure from the Belarusian authorities for some time before the elections owing to their participation in rallies. Some of the others – the youth branch of the BPF, and the youth wing of the United Democratic Forces – were set up late and hurriedly and did not reportedly have a large membership, existing more on paper than anything else. In order to counter those movements, Lukashenka had set up his own Belarusian Republican Youth Union, or Lukamol, in 2002, which organized pro-government rallies and concerts. The movement was active at schools in recruiting members and pressuring those in the opposition movements to halt their activities. Commonly the threat of expulsion was used against students active in the opposition youth movements. Some students were drawn to Lukamol because it offered an avenue to a good career with the government later in jobs that did not require skill so much as loyalty (Bekkerman 2005). Despite its claims of 430,000 members nationwide, reports stated that only 3,000 members actually paid dues and many members were unaware that they were members because they were simply enrolled without their knowledge. Prior to the elections youth movements were particularly targeted by the authorities, who often visited families and warned parents that their children's activities could cause trouble (Potocki and Vidanava 4 December 2007).

Limited Material Support

A further factor contributing towards the failure of the 'Jeans Revolution' was the lack of any major benefactor that could bankroll the opposition and demonstrators. While the opposition lacked a bountiful treasury Lukashenka had a great deal

of leeway in allocating the country's resources and revenues as he saw fit. All revenues flowed into the presidential budget, which was under the personal control of Lukashenka. The President justified this control as the only effective way of preventing corrupt officials from misappropriating the funds. But information concerning the budget is not open to the public, so Lukashenka is not accountable to anyone (*Time* 2007).

Foreign assistance to the opposition was limited. Governments dispensing grants and foreign NGOs working in the sphere of democratization are not funded to directly overthrow regimes, but to foster an atmosphere where political pluralism and transparency exist so that representative governments can come to power through a fair process. Such grants are therefore channeled to NGOs working in support of free media, political transparency and such. In February 2006 the EU funded a consortium of media that broadcast independent news in Russian and Belarusian. But such organizations had been under extreme pressure in Belarus from 1997 when the director of the Soros Foundation in Belarus was expelled from the country for participating in street rallies. The Belarusian government has frequently equated foreign involvement in the country with spying, and in February 2006 the KGB accused the Polish embassy of plotting to disrupt the country ahead of the elections. Poland has been the butt of spying accusations from Minsk on several occasions in the past. As it is next door, opposition supporters often hold meetings in Poland free from obstruction. It is also the country to which Zyanon Paznyak went into exile briefly. Another neighbour with a track record of democratic elections, Lithuania, was accused of training opposition youth militants in camps there. The Lithuanian Ambassador to Belarus, Petras Vaitekunas, flatly denied the charge, although there is evidence that such trainings had taken place (Charter 97 13 February 2006).

Belarus also denied visas to foreign officials that could criticize its political processes, such as UN Special Rapporteur Adrian Severin, who was in charge of looking into the human rights situation in Belarus (Human Rights Watch 2006). As there is not much business in Belarus, most embassies have small staffs. After the expulsion of ten US diplomats in May 2008, the US embassy was left with just four staff. The US responded to the expulsion by freezing the accounts of Belarus's oil processing chemical plant, Belnaftakhim, and banning US companies from dealing with it (Whitmore 30 April 2008).

That hostility to the West contrasts sharply with the government attitudes in Georgia and even Ukraine. In Ukraine, President Leonid Kuchma took the initiative to invite outside parties into the country to try and resolve the crisis after protests began after the second round of voting. Kuchma personally called Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski and asked him to mediate in the crisis. He also invited the EU representative for a common foreign and security policy, Javier Solana, to talks. Ultimately a group of mediators consisting of Kwasniewski, Solana, President Valdas Adamkus of Lithuania, OSCE Secretary General Jan Kubis and the speaker of the Russian Duma, Boris Gryzlov, formed a mediation group along with prominent Ukrainian politicians. The invitations to mediate were not just a show. Kuchma accepted their recommendation to hold a third round of election

with an army of observers present even though there was nothing in the country's constitution mandating such an act (Pifer 2007). Lukashenka did not appear to have even contemplated such a move and basked in Russia's congratulatory remarks about the fairness of his electoral process.

Following the announcement of Lukashenka's spectacular win of 82.6 per cent of the vote, the EU extended its visa ban on Lukashenka and some 35 Belarusian officials in May and froze Lukashenka's assets. The US adopted similar measures in June (Human Rights Watch 2006). The EU also awarded Milinkevich the prestigious Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought. While such measures are noteworthy, they offered only limited support to the opposition. The liberal Russian party, Union of Right Forces, attended the October 2005 opposition meeting where the opposition elected Milinkevich as their candidate. Members of the Ukrainian youth movement, Pora, also attended (Kudrytski 2005). Members of Georgia's youth movement *Kmara* also showed their solidarity with the Belarusian youth, but overall outside involvement was not decisive, and it was portrayed negatively by Belarus's state controlled media as sinister outside meddling and interference in a country's internal affairs.

While the Belarusian opposition was hindered because the international community could only offer limited support to groups under pressure in the country, it is also hindered by the lack of substantial domestic resources available to it. The private sector's share of the GDP in Belarus is the lowest for all of the CIS, so there were no oligarchs who could provide funds for the opposition (Drakakhrust 3 June 2008). In 1996, during the Russian presidential elections that saw Boris Yeltsin pitted against the leader of the Communist Party Gennady Zyuganov, a number of Russian oligarchs, such as Vladimir Guzinsky, Boris Berezovsky and others heavily contributed to Yeltsin's campaign to keep the communists out of power. In Ukraine during the Orange Revolution, the Ukrainian chocolate magnate Petro Poroshenko was a strong supporter of Viktor Yushchenko. In fact, in terms of campaign financing some have characterized Ukraine's Orange Revolution as a contest between the country's millionaires (who supported Yushchenko) against its billionaires (supporting Kuchma/Yanukovych). In Kyrgyzstan the Tulip Revolution was financed by disgruntled businessmen who felt they were being sidelined in the parliamentary election by President Askar Akayev's favourites. Even the uprising in Andijan in Uzbekistan in May 2005 was led by supporters of detained businessmen who provided jobs for some 2,000 in the Ferghana Valley. Belarus had no such business elites that favored a privatized economy and would back an opposition that preferred market reforms. The emergence of such a group could shift the political landscape, but it is unlikely that there would be any substantial changes in the near future as Belarus ranks as the 106th worst out of 155 countries in regards to its business climate (Marples 21 November 2006).

Apart from the lack of an independent economic elite with resources at its disposal, Belarus also lacks an independent political elite. In Ukraine during its revolution, the mayor of Kiev, Oleksandr Omelchenko, allowed Yushchenko's supporters use of city hall facilities such as bathrooms and a cafeteria while they staged their protests in the winter weather. That certainly helped sustain the demonstrators

through the cold. In Belarus, all officials were appointed and owed their allegiance to Lukashenka, and not to an independent electorate (RFE/RL, 14 June 2007). The mayor of Minsk did not open any facilities to the protestors and the crowds dwindled as the days passed.

Support for Lukashenka

A final critical factor that cannot be ignored in assessing why Belarus was unable to stage a successful colour revolution was the fact that Lukashenka does enjoy popular support in some circles. As the director of the government of Belarus he is also the main employer in the country so people are beholden to him. Police in particular are well paid and have a vested interest in the system. Estimates state that 80 per cent of the country rely either on state salaries or they rely on the state for pensions or other subsidies, as the private sector is small. Pensioners are particularly noted for being supportive of the president, and with all of those people depending on the state, they have a vested interest in preserving the current system (*Time* 2007).

In an exit poll conducted by Intermedia following the 2006 election, the results showed 52.9 said they voted for Lukashenka. Given the virulence of the opposition's criticism of the economy and his authoritarianism the numbers may seem surprising, but the Belarusian public appears to be growing increasingly content with their economy. The Intermedia poll reported that when asked if a person was content with their standard of living 4.6 per cent said very satisfied and 30.1 per cent said somewhat satisfied. At just under 35 satisfied that may not seem very high, but in 2000 those numbers were 1.3 per cent and 13.8 per cent respectively, indicating that the Belarusian public is becoming more optimistic about their living standards (Council on Foreign Relations 15 March 2006).

Another factor that lends Lukashenka support is that the Rose and Orange revolutions were generally viewed negatively by most Belarusians. Although only 48.8 per cent of those polled by Intermedia felt the elections were free and fair, since only 9 per cent agreed, or somewhat agreed with the statement that the Rose Revolution brought positive changes to Georgia, and the number was just 10.8 per cent for Ukraine, it is clear that impeachment through revolution is not favored by the public. Lukashenka's pro-Russian orientation is also popular with the majority, with 82.3 per cent in favor of it, while only 32.5 per cent viewed the US favorably (Council on Foreign Relations 15 March 2006).

Yet another factor that made the success of Belarus's post-presidential election revolution unlikely was that unlike in Ukraine or Kyrgyzstan, Lukashenka could call out the police and have them suppress the demonstrators. The police are well paid and owe their positions to Lukashenka. In Ukraine, the defence minister had ruled out using force in the Orange Revolution while the security services stated they were there to protect the people and not oppress them (Pifer 2007). It is worth noting that the police in Kiev and Bishkek are paid from the municipal treasury and are accountable and dependent on the city mayors, not the president. In Belarus, all are beholden to Lukashenka.

While much of his support comes from pensioners and those provided for by the system, Lukashenka has not neglected the youth and adopted tactics to bring them to his side. When the opposition organized a 10,000-strong rally in March 2007, a year after the elections, rather than sending out the police, Lukashenka staged an outdoor concert at the same time, drawing youth to the concert and away from the demonstration (RFE/RL 27 March 2007). Since the 2006 election his courtship of the youth has not abated.

Conclusion

The prospects for a successful colour revolution in Belarus are not good. In the run up to the September 2008 parliamentary elections members of the opposition continued to be harried. Mikheil Pashkevich from the United Civic Party was sentenced on 30 June to a week in jail for hooliganism after being appointed an internal election observer by the party. The same day an internal observer from the Belarusian Helsinki Committee, Eduard Balanchak, was also sentenced to ten days in jail and fined. Two days earlier, Jauhen Afnahel, a member of European Belarus – a pro-EU organization – was sentenced to ten days in prison for disorderly conduct. Around the same time two students associated with the opposition – Franak Viachorka and Zmitsier Bulianau – were banned from traveling after having been expelled from their Belarusian universities earlier, making them eligible for military duty (RFE/RL 1 July 2008). None of that boded well for the opposition in the coming elections and when the ballot took place not a single opposition candidate won any of the 110 seats up for grabs, even though 70 opposition candidates were registered and competed. Instead, every seat went to a pro-Lukashenka candidate. The election was criticized by many international observers and Belarusian NGOs such as Viasna (Viasna 29 Septemper 2008). Given that the elections followed the same pattern as previous votes, there is little evidence of the change that would allow a colour revolution.

As for the unity of the opposition, that began to unravel soon after the elections. At the end of 2006 the Social Democratic Party (Hramada) continued to oppose joining other opposition parties to form a united front (Jamestown Foundation 20 December 2006). In March 2007 the opposition planned to hold a nationwide congress one year after the elections. Their candidate from the elections, Alyaksandr Milinkevich, refused to attend, citing internal squabbling over leadership as his reason. That only enhanced the image of a disunited opposition. Other members of the opposition criticized Milinkevich for his absence, with the leader of the opposition branch of the Communist Party, Syarhei Kalyakhin, accusing Milinkevich of non-attendance for fear of losing his leadership position, which he only narrowly won over the head of the United Civic Party's Anatol Lyabedzka (RFE/RL 26 February 2007). As a result of his refusal to attend and his perceived uncooperativeness, Milinkevich was voted out of the position as head of the opposition coalition.

The youth movements appear more cooperative than their adult counterparts. They are also the sector that wants change the most, but is not always inspired

by the current opposition leaders. After the 2006 elections, one movement, Zubr, disbanded itself to join a united front (Belapan 5 May 2006). While the youth had rallied for Milinkevich, analysts point to the generation gap between opposition leaders and the youth, which needs to be addressed if the older leaders are to retain the support of the youth.

Ultimately the problem remains that not enough Belarusians are mobilized to make a change. Lukashenka's plans to open a nuclear power station to ease the country's dependence on energy imports has struck a chord of despair with many, who are still dealing with the aftermath of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster that contaminated almost a quarter of the country's territory. Yet even the demonstrations against building the power plant could not attract a large enough crowd to make a difference (RFE/RL 5 May 2006). Even at the height of the 'Jeans Revolution' the maximum number of protestors that turned out in the aftermath of the 2006 presidential elections was 20,000. In Ukraine that number was around 1 million (Aslund and McFaul 2004). A better chance for change would be the creation of an independent business elite, since there is no independent political elite in power. In the summer of 2008 there was some hope that the country's economy would allow for such an event when there was talk of privatizing some lucrative state assets in order to pay for the increasing costs of energy supplies from Russia. Given the role of the business class in the successful colour revolutions, such a development could be the key to real change in Belarus.

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9 Russia

Thomas Ambrosio

Introduction

The authoritarian governments of the former Soviet Union appeared increasingly vulnerable in the wake of the Rose and Orange revolutions. It was not simply the temporal proximity of these events that was worrying, though that certainly was important. Rather, the similarities in the way in which the regimes were ousted and the apparent connections between the cases raised the prospect that these 'colour revolutions' were the beginning of a new democratic wave, one which might call into question the survival of autocratic governments throughout the region. This concern intensified after the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan, which reinforced the belief that a broader trend was developing.[1] Democratic contagion, it appeared, had infected the former Soviet Union.

No country in the region other than Russia had both the interest and the capacity to attempt to construct a bulwark against democratization. Since Vladimir Putin assumed the presidency in 2000, the Russian Federation has steadily moved away from democratic values. By the middle of the decade, the Kremlin had established the foundations of a stable, authoritarian government (Ostrow 2007). However, events along its periphery raised serious concerns that this new impulse for regime change might spill over into Russia itself. Consequently, the Kremlin undertook a multifaceted approach to this problem by adopting a number of policies at home and abroad to counter the so-called 'orange plague' (*Argumenty i Fakty* 16 March 2005; *What the Papers Say, Part A* 1 April 2005).

This chapter is somewhat different than the others found in this volume since it does not focus on the tensions engendered by the colour revolutions between the region's regimes and its opponents, how forces outside the region either promote or suppress the chances for democratization, or the role that civil society and ordinary people played during this period. Instead, it is primarily concerned with outlining a number of the proactive strategies that the Kremlin implemented to undermine democratization at home and abroad.

The literature on democratization at the international level has rarely paid attention to the possible responses by autocratic regimes against democratic trends, focusing instead on those factors that advance democratization (Lynch 2004: 341–42). Alex Pravda (2001: 2) observed that an 'international pull' toward democratization reinforces the 'domestic push' of internal forces. What has often

not been explored is the countervailing force of autocrats. Rather than democracy promotion, this chapter reveals that nondemocratic governments have a variety of options when confronted by what appears to be a democratic wave. In contrast to the strategies of democracy promotion, these can be called the strategies of *authoritarian resistance*. Thus, after first summarizing the general reaction in Russia to the color revolutions, sections two through seven each explore a different strategy of authoritarian resistance adopted by the Kremlin: insulate, redefine, accuse, bolster, subvert and cooperate. The final section of this chapter provides some conclusions about how the Kremlin's policy in the immediate wake of the color revolutions helped to ensure that Russia held smooth and highly managed parliamentary and presidential elections in both 2007 and 2008.

Before moving on to the next section, three caveats are in order. The first is that the Kremlin must consider several varied and overlapping interests when constructing its domestic and foreign policies. While countering the colour revolutions was certainly important, many of the policies identified in this chapter serve multiple purposes. For example, supporting Belarus (bolster) was intended to help the Lukashenko regime withstand democratic pressures, but also served Russia's served geopolitical and military goals. Resisting democratization came to play an increasingly important part of Russian domestic and foreign policies, but often reinforced (and was reinforced by) other interests. Second, it is not asserted that the policies outlined in this chapter were sufficient to block further democratization in the region, nor can we assert with any degree of accuracy that, without these policies, additional authoritarian governments would have fallen. The sustainability of autocracy in any country usually cannot be reduced to a single cause. Nevertheless, these strategies indicate that the Kremlin was proactive and erred on the side of caution when confronted by the potential of a democratic wave in the region. Finally, this chapter is meant as an overview of the policies adopted by the Russian government toward the problem of the color revolutions. More in-depth analysis of these strategies can be found elsewhere (Ambrosio 2009).

Russia Reacts to the Color Revolutions

The colour revolutions were not unique to the former Soviet Union, but rather were an established phenomenon that Bunce and Wolchik (2006: 284) called 'electoral revolutions' – 'attempts by opposition leaders and citizens to use elections, sometimes in combination with political protests, to defeat illiberal incumbents or their anointed successors.' Within the context of the Georgia-Ukraine-Kyrgyzstan cascade, the most immediate and relevant antecedent was the 2000 overthrow of Slobodan Milošević in which the youth movement Optor! (Resistance!) launched a campaign to oust the Serbian leader after a fraudulent presidential election. The similarities between this and the subsequent revolutions in the former Soviet Union, as well as the apparent connections between the revolutions themselves, were quite striking. For example, these revolutions contained not just similar processes, but also the same critical actors, such as activists from Georgia who received help and advice from their Serbian counterparts and then, in turn, aided the 'orange

coalition' in Ukraine. This led some observers to argue that a broader political wave was forming that would overwhelm the authoritarian governments of the former Soviet Union. This was best summarized by Andrei Vladimirov (2004), a Russian commentator, who proffered the following scenario: 'The day before yesterday: Belgrade. Yesterday: Tbilisi. Today: Kiev. Tommorrow: Moscow.' Some took this a step farther and asserted that this was the beginning of a global phenomenon, as seen by the *Economist*'s suggestion that these revolutions might be the first of a worldwide 'rainbow of revolutions' (*Economist* 21 January 2006).

The Kremlin's reaction to the colour revolutions was quite (and not surprisingly) negative (Herd 2005a, 2005b). In a January 2005 speech that addressed new threats and challenges to the Russian Federation, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov asserted that the government considered these attempts to 'impose' democracy to be illegitimate and required a significant reaction to counter 'exports of revolution to the CIS states, no matter and what color – pink, blue, you name it' (*Federal News Service* 13 January 2005). This point was made more bluntly a year later in an opinion piece addressed to Western audiences in which he argued that 'the possibility of a violent assault on the constitutional order of some post-Soviet states' was amongst the most serious threats to Russian national security (Ivanov 2006a). Other Kremlin officials took a similar approach. For example, Vladislav Surkov, the Kremlin's top ideologue, called the color revolution's 'coups' (*Official Kremlin International News Broadcast* 21 June 2005) and later argued that those seeking to impose 'orange methods' in Russia constituted a 'very real threat to [Russian] sovereignty' and must be stopped (*RIA Novosti* 3 March 2006). Igor Ivanov, the Secretary of the Russian Security Council, rejected the legitimacy of these 'revolutionary upheavals' and 'extra-parliamentary methods,' and denied that they had any connection to democracy at all (*RIA Novosti* 10 February 2005). It is important to note that the colour revolutions were conducted peacefully and were liberal attempts to overturn illiberal electoral outcomes.[2] Nevertheless, the Kremlin sought to frame these events as illegitimate by associating them with violence and threat.

The Russian government did more than simply complain about the colour revolutions. It initiated a multifaceted response that sought to counter these democratic trends, preserve authoritarianism in the region, and undermine those factors associated with the colour revolutions. The subsequent sections of this chapter explore some of these policies.

Insulate

Since revolutions are fundamentally domestic-level processes, an autocracy's primary line of defence against regime change is at home through polices aimed at consolidating power and weakening potential domestic opponents. Within the context of the colour revolutions, however, the threat has a strong external component because of the seeming spread of revolution from one country to another through demonstration effects, the symbolism of regime change, a sense of momentum, and the active export of revolutionary ideas, training, and organizational know-how. Three actors in particular were seen as being instrumental in precipitating

and sustaining the color revolutions: *non-governmental organizations* (NGOs), which established the basis for the democratic opposition, often with financial and organizational assistance from external sources (Western governments or NGOs); domestic and foreign *election monitors*, which exposed the government's electoral fraud; and anti-government *youth groups*, which initiated the street protests and were directly responsible for the change in regime. Therefore, in order to counter the colour revolutions, the Kremlin needed to ensure that Russia was insulated from eternal democratic pressures by undermining each of these three actors.

Although the Putin government was hostile to pro-democracy and pro-human rights NGOs prior to the Rose Revolution, its policies intensified soon thereafter. The importance of cracking down on NGOs was well-summarized by Sergei Markov, a Kremlin-aligned political commentator and later a Duma member from Putin's United Russia party:

> NGOs are the greatest political weapon of the 21st Century. New forces came to power by means of political coups in the 19th Century and by means of political parties in the 20th Century. These days, the basic weapon used to increase political power is the NGO. In the lead-up to Russia's federal elections, the West will intensify funding for NGOs in Russia. The US State Department has already said this openly.
>
> (Romanov 2007)

In his May 2004 annual address before the Duma, Putin attacked these organizations for not serving the interests of Russia or her people, but rather acting, in large part, to support foreign interests (RTR Russia TV 2004a). A little over a year later (and six months after the Orange Revolution), Putin declared that he would actively work against those NGOs that were funded from abroad because they were de facto agents of foreign powers (Voronina *et al.* 2005). Foreign-backed NGOs were seen as instrumental to any substantive opposition to the government because domestic political forces were scared to openly oppose the government after a number of high-profile figures were punished for their anti-Kremlin stance.[3] Running parallel to these statements was the April 2005 creation of a Kremlin-aligned Public Chamber to ostensibly represent civil society in a way that the government could manage. Although it sometimes proved to be more independent than initially expected, the legitimacy of alternative voices was seen as being weakened by this body because of its 'official' status and near-monopoly of government-controlled media coverage.

In the final months of 2005, the government introduced a bill that sought to limit the ability of foreign NGOs to function on Russian soil because, according to Putin, they were 'foreign policy instruments [of] other states' (Medetsky 2005). Furthermore, all NGOs (not just foreign) were to be highly regulated as a means to restrict their ability to oppose the government as the country moved toward the December 2007 parliamentary elections. NGOs became mired in red tape and subject to closure under conditions that were expansive, unclear, and arbitrary (International Center for Not-for-Profit Law 2006). The greatest restrictions were

placed on NGOs with ties to foreign organizations and funding sources outside of Russia. Within two weeks of the law's passage, Russia accused four British embassy employees of spying and linked these individuals to pro-democracy NGOs. Less than a week later, opposition NGOs began to be suspended or closed outright by the government (Page 2006).

The second key set of actors in the colour revolutions were election monitors, who were seen as being instrumental in undermining the ability of autocratic governments to 'manage' elections. Returning again to Markov (2007): 'The techniques for engineering "color revolutions" focus on the legitimacy of elections. They aim to demonstrate that the electoral process is invalid, and seize power. It seems likely that there will be attempts to apply these "Orange techniques" to the Russian electoral process in 2007–8.'

Even before the colour revolutions, the Kremlin had adopted a negative view of the European election monitoring regime conducted primarily by the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Beginning with the 2003–4 election cycle, these organizations began to openly criticize the conduct of Russian elections, after nearly a decade of quiet acquiescence to questionable election practices (Saari 2007). This precipitated a three-fold response by the Kremlin: at first the Russian government simply ignored these criticisms, then it tried to redirect the criticisms by pointing out problems in the established democracies, and finally it established its own electoral monitoring system via the Russian-dominated Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) which gave Russian elections (and those of other autocratic governments) the political equivalent of a clean bill of health. Russia also began to question the very legitimacy of the European election monitoring regime, as seen in a July 2004 letter ('Statement by CIS Member Countries …' 2005) addressed to the OSCE which accused the organization of focusing too much on human rights, failing to respect the sovereignty of its member states, and applying 'double standards and selective approaches' toward the former Soviet republics.[4]

Like the situation surrounding foreign NGOs, it would not be until Orange Revolution that the Kremlin took more concrete steps against external election monitors. Beginning in December 2004, the government intensified its rhetorical attacks against the OSCE, largely along the lines of the July 2004 letter. However, the government also added the charge that the election observers were responsible for provoking 'instability' in the former Soviet Union (Loof 2005). Furthermore, in the spring of 2005, Russia threatened to block the OSCE's budget and withhold dues to the organization unless it adopted a more consensus-based approach to election monitoring (Dempsey 2005). According to this plan, the only conclusions that the OSCE and other bodies would be authorized to release about a particular election would be those to which the West and Russia agreed. This would have the effect of gutting the election monitoring system of any substantive ability to expose fake or 'potemkin' elections.[5]

The final impetus of the colour revolutions was the youth groups that took to the streets and sustained the protests against the autocratic regimes in Yugoslavia, Georgia and Ukraine. Inspired by previous cases, Russia's young people began to

mobilize. It was felt that if this was left unchecked, the youth movement's mix of idealism, enthusiasm, and pro-democracy and pro-liberal sentiments could make them a challenging opponent for the Kremlin (Schwirtz 2007). This became apparent in January 2005 when anti-government rallies by pensioners were supported by some youth groups – these protests were the largest seen in Russia since Putin became president. By 2005, the Kremlin had exerted its control over the main levers of power in Russia – political institutions, the electoral system, the army, regional governments and the media – but it clearly did not control 'the streets'. Thus, coming so soon after the events in Ukraine, these rallies prompted the government to act decisively.

Rather then potentially provoking a backlash by directly confronting these groups, the Kremlin embarked on a policy of co-opting Russia's young people through the formation of a number of nominally independent (but government-managed) youth movements, the most prominent of which was Nashi (Ours).[6] Although its leaders called it a spontaneous outpouring of support for the Kremlin by Russia's 'patriotic' youth, it was nothing of the sort – top political figures from within the government and aligned with the Kremlin, including Surkov and Markov, were instrumental in Nashi's creation. Markov was quite explicit about the purposes of the organization: 'Nashi was formed to block the possibility of an Orange revolution in Russia during elections' (Halpin 2008).

Fueled by extensive funding, organizational support, and ubiquitous coverage on the government-controlled media, Nashi grew rapidly. By late 2007, it had some 100,000 members.[7] The group held numerous street protests against Russia's supposed enemies and hosted annual summer camps which, under the guise of social events, were involved in pro-Kremlin indoctrination and training exercises designed to prepare its members to oppose anti-government forces (Nowak 2007; Halpin 2007). The list of 'enemies' of Russia included Western powers and a diverse mix of pro-democracy liberals, far-left communists, and neo-fascists – basically, anyone who opposed the Kremlin or its policies. Nashi's rhetoric seamlessly blended domestic regime opponents with external threats, fascists and past enemies, depicting alternative youth voices as illegitimate and portraying themselves as the only patriotic choice for Russia's young people. Thus, with anti-government youth movements effectively neutralized, the possibility of a colour revolution in Russia was weakened dramatically.

Redefine

When protecting one's regime from democratic contagion, it is not simply enough to deal with the practical matters of undermining potential domestic opponents. The spread of democracy is also a battle of ideas and authoritarian governments need to be prepared to respond to this threat. Russia did this by manipulating the meaning of democracy through the introduction of the concept of 'sovereign democracy'. By seeking to redefine the ideological struggle between democracy and autocracy, the Kremlin sought to challenge the democratic West on its own terms.

Moscow has had a long history of using language to mask the true state of its

political system. During the communist period, the Soviet Union and its allies formed 'people's republics', which, they argued, were not only democratic, but superior to the West's capitalist-controlled, false democracies. Some time after independence, this strategy was renewed under the guide of claiming that Russia was a 'managed' democracy. In a July 2005 speech, Vladislav Surkov introduced a new concept into this ideological battle (*Nezavisimaya Gazeta* 2005). He argued that Russia's sovereignty was indirectly threatened by Western governments and NGOs, who use the language of human rights and democracy to undermine the stability of the Russian government and state. Russia must stand up to these criticisms and establish a political system that is protected from external pressures – in essence, a 'sovereign democracy'. What a sovereign democracy would look like in practice was not directly addressed by Surkov, but it is clear from his comments that such a state would resemble a nondemocratic, corporatist system in which the content and range of acceptable politics would be firmly managed by the Kremlin in order to ensure stability (i.e. the continued rule by the government). This would be an illiberal system disguised as a democracy – that is, the very system that the Putin administration has sought to establish by restricting press freedoms, centralizing power, and undermining potential political rivals, but with an emphasis on presenting a fiction of being democratic.

The sovereign democracy concept was also on display in the summer of 2006, just before the Group of Eight (G-8) summit in St Petersburg. In order to preempt any criticisms by the democratic members of the group, Sergei Ivanov (2006b) published an article in *Izvestia* in which he outlined the basis for the re-emergence of Russia as a great power. Sovereign democracy was identified as the cornerstone of Russian geopolitical status and domestic stability because it allowed Russia to counter Western criticism and determine its own political future without outside interference: 'By declaring its own ideological project, Russia has entered a harsh and uncompromising competitive struggle. We should not evade this inevitable confrontation; rather we should defend our position, consistently and with solid arguments, against our critics and open opponents.' He further argued that, rather than seeking liberalization, the West uses 'democratic slogans … as a cover for active interference in the internal affairs of other states.' Thus, adherence to sovereign democracy was seen as even more important now than before the colour revolutions.

Sovereign democracy came under some criticism from within Russia itself. In response, the Kremlin sought to discredit these opponents by linking them to those deemed to be the internal and external enemies of the Russian people (*The Russian Business Monitor* 27 November 2006). Soon after the G-8 summit, a political fight erupted between Surkov and Ivanov on the one hand, and the man who Putin would ultimately choose to succeed him, Dmitri Medvedev. Medvedev argued that placing an adjective before the word democracy revealed a lack of support for the concept, and some observers wondered whether sovereign democracy would appear as part of the platform for United Russia (Zubchenko 2006). However, the matter was soon resolved and it was included as the party's guiding principle at its party congress in October 2007.[8] In the Russian Federation's official history

textbook for students, the final chapter was entitled, 'Sovereign Democracy', and it quoted Surkov liberally, serving as a wide-ranging defense of Putin's policies (*Moscow Times* 11 July 2007). Thus, sovereign democracy because enshrined as the guiding principle of Putin's Russia as a whole.

The Kremlin's rhetorical response to external criticisms was based upon a fundamental misrepresentation: Russia's political path is not moving toward democracy, but rather the policies of the Putin administration solidly shifted the country toward full authoritarianism. While certainly every democracy will look different, the sovereign democracy concept was not democracy, nor was it an expression of the sovereignty of the Russian people; instead, it was a cover to legitimize the government's dominance of the Russian political system. Nevertheless, by approaching the ideological struggle between democracy and autocracy in this way, the Kremlin sought to portray any external criticisms as morally illegitimate.

Accuse

In many ways, the sovereign democracy concept was a defensive strategy, in that it sought to reply to external criticisms. However, the Kremlin also embarked on a more offensive strategy of accusing Western countries of not living up to liberal democratic standards. It asserted that the problems surrounding democracy and human rights in the region were located not in Russia, but elsewhere. Nowhere was this more clearly expressed than in Russia's harsh denunciations of Estonia for its supposed violations of the rights of its Russian-speaking citizens. The level of vitriol directed against Estonia was far disproportionate to the nature of Tallinn's policies. Rather than describing reality, however, this strategy was meant to place the West, rather than Russia, on the defensive.

Tensions have long existed between Estonia and Russia.[9] Estonia emerged from the Soviet Union with large populations of ethnic-Russians and Russian-speakers who moved to the republic after it was annexed from Moscow during World War II. In order both to ensure that the titular nationality remained dominant and to reverse this demographic legacy of the Soviet occupation, those who arrived in the country after World War II (and their descendants) were not granted automatic citizenship. Instead, language, residency, and other requirements were imposed before they could become Estonian citizens.[10] Russia had consistently criticized Tallinn for these policies during the 1990s and made three general claims: the human rights of the Russian-speakers were being violated; Estonia had a 'democratic deficit' because it did not allow non-citizens to vote in state-wide elections; and that the Estonian government glorified Nazis by seeking to reject the legacy of the USSR and honor those who fought against Soviet occupation. Each of these accusations are exaggerations or outright misrepresentations: a clear path to citizenship is open to the Russian-speakers, many of whom had begun or completed the process of acquiring this status or had left Estonia and returned to Russia; Estonia has a better record of liberalism and human rights than Russia and non-citizens are allowed to vote in municipal elections; and, just because Tallinn has rejected the legitimacy of the Soviet occupation did not automatically mean that they supported the

Soviet Union's opponent, Nazi Germany. Nevertheless, this rhetoric intensified after 2000 and became especially prominent as Estonia was scheduled to join both the European Union (EU) and NATO in 2004.

Estonia's admission into these organizations, especially in light of the push for regional democratization following the Rose Revolution in 2003, made it even more important for the Kremlin to blur the lines between its shift toward authoritarianism and the consolidation of democracy in Estonia. For instance, speaking directly about Estonia, Sergei Ivanov called 'countries that distance themselves from democratic norms and human liberties' a source of 'danger' to their neighbors (*Baltic News Service* 13 July 2004). Yuri Fedotov, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, called Estonia a 'sickness' in the heart of Europe (*TASS* 3 May 2007) and Russia's Foreign Ministry referred to the country as the centre of a renewed 'brown peril' in the region (*Baltic News Service* 19 July 2005). By supporting Estonia, Europe and the United States were held to be responsible for feeding these illiberal tendencies (Gutterman 2007; *TASS* 3 May 2007; Agarkov and Kurbanova 20 October 2005).

Russia also worked through several international organizations to advance its 'accuse' strategy. Negotiations over the renewal of the 1997 Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and Russia was held up by Moscow, which demanded that Brussels act to change Estonian policies. The Kremlin accused the EU of having 'double standards' when dealing with human rights and minority protections: one which is advanced with outside countries (particularly Russia and other non-democracies) and another which gives tacit approval for violations of these principles (e.g. in Estonia) (Danilova 2005). Russia also sought to get other organizations to criticize Estonia, including the United Nations (*RIA Novosti* 2006a) and the OSCE (Simorova 2004), though with mixed success.

It is important to note that these accusations are not meant to describe history or current policies accurately, but rather to divert attention away from Russia. Thus, international concern over liberal values, human rights, and democracy should not be direct at the Kremlin, but elsewhere.

Bolster

The Kremlin also took concrete steps to support fellow autocrats in the region, particularly Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko. The logic of this is simple: if an authoritarian regime is able to withstand a democratic wave, the demonstration effects of prior revolutions might be muted and any sense of momentum might be halted. Consequently, by bolstering like-minded regimes, regional democratic trends could be undermined significantly, if not stopped in their tracks. While Russian policy toward Belarus is a classic case of the overlap between the strategic interests of the Russian state and the political interests of the Kremlin, there is a clear pattern of helping the Belarusian regime to weather the democratic pressures against it. These policies had been in place prior to the colour revolutions, but increased significantly in light of the diplomatic and political pressures surrounding the Belarusian 2004 parliamentary elections and the 2006 presidential election.

Less than two weeks before Belarus held parliamentary elections in October 2004 (which also included a referendum on allowing Lukashenko to run for an unlimited number of terms), the US increased pressure on Minsk by passing the Belarus Democracy Act, which sought to assist opposition groups in the country. However, after the fraudulent vote (in which pro-democracy forces did not win a single seat), Russia came out strongly in favour of the Lukashenko regime, calling the vote 'transparent' (Jack and Warner 2004), accusing the West of using criticism to undermine close Russia-Belarus relations (*Official Kremlin International News Broadcast* 19 October 2004), and denouncing the provisions of the Belarus Democracy Act (*Agence France Presse* 21 October 2004).

After the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, American pressure on Belarus increased, as did Russian support. US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice called Belarus an 'outpost of tyranny … the last true dictatorship' in Europe (Dinmore 2005), met with Belarusian opposition figures and asserted that it was 'time for a change to come to Belarus' (*UPI* 21 April 2005). As a result of these statements, the Kremlin sprang into action, with, for example, Foreign Minister Lavrov flatly rejected Rice's call for regime change. Russian support was considered so important at this time that Lukashenko publicly thanked Putin and Lavrov (Petrov 2005).

As Belarus moved toward its March 2006 presidential election, Russian support increased. Sergei Ivanov made it clear that Russia would not countenance a colour revolution in Belarus: 'We treat negatively a flare-up of disorders after the election and believe it is necessary to do [our] utmost to prevent them' (Babkin and Latyshev 2006). A few weeks later, Lavrov gave a similar warning during a meeting with his Belarusian counterpart (RIA Novosti 2006b). State-controlled television in Russia, which is broadcast into Belarus and widely watched, gave extensive, positive coverage to Lukashenko, while at the same time criticizing the opposition and accusing Western governments (as well as Georgia and Ukraine) of interfering in Belarus's domestic politics. Just before the election, Russian Prime Minister Mikheil Fradkov met with Lukashenko and all but endorsed him for a third term (Netreba 2006). Around this time, it was also announced that Belarus would pay far less for its natural gas imports than Ukraine – a clear message to the Belarusian people that keeping Lukashenko in power would be rewarded, in contrast to Ukraine in which the Orange Revolution was answered by a substantial hike in prices. After the election, Russian and CIS observers declared the election legitimate and Lukashenko was publicly congratulated by Putin and the Russian foreign ministry. While the scattered and ineffective Belarusian opposition likely represented little threat to Lukashenko, the regime would have found its task more difficult without help from the Kremlin.

Subvert

It is not enough to simply support authoritarian regimes as a bulwark against democratization. In order to delegitimize the concept of regime change, as well as to counteract the powerful symbolic power of democratic successes, it is also important to undermine those new democracies that were established as a result of

democratic revolutions. If a new democracy is seen as less stable, less effective, and less desirable than the government it replaced, then there will be, in effect, a negative demonstration effect. Russian policy toward the two original color revolution countries, Georgia and Ukraine, fits into this pattern quite well. Again, like the situation with Belarus, the strategic interests of Russia and the political interests of the Kremlin closely overlap: the color revolutions resulted not only in regime change, but also a desire by both countries to reorient toward the West, including actively seeking NATO membership. Therefore, it is not surprising that relations between Russia, on one hand, and Tbilisi and Kiev, on the other, deteriorated. Nevertheless, there is good reason to believe that the political issues were significant: although multiple factors were likely at work, the timing of the downturn was conspicuous, especially given that it occurred after the Orange Revolution, when there was more reason to believe that the Rose Revolution was not simply a one-off event that the Kremlin could have lived with.

Immediately after independence, the strongly anti-Russian nationalism of President Zviad Gamsakhurdia ensured that relations between Russia and Georgia would remain troubled for some time. Gamsakhurdia's overthrow (reportedly with help from Russian troops) and the return of former Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze as the new president, could not fundamentally improve the intractable issues dividing the two countries, such as the status of the pro-Russian, secessionist provinces of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, the tensions over remaining of Russian military bases on Georgian soil, and whether Georgia was giving aid and comfort to Chechen terrorists who fled (along with other refugees) to Georgia's Pankisi Gorge. Nevertheless, relations had improved slightly before the Rose Revolution and, even after Shevardnadze was ousted, both sides appeared optimistic that they could work out their problems (ITAR-TASS 7 December 2004). This changed abruptly in 2005.

Without the Orange Revolution, the Rose Revolution was accepted by Russia as the price of providing stability to its southern neighbor. However, this assumed a very different character after the Orange Revolution. Consequently, Russian policies toward Tbilisi hardened. This began as a series of rhetorical attacks against the Rose Revolution. Igor Ivanov's February 2005 statement cited above directly questioned the legitimacy of the Rose Revolution and, less than a week later, Lavrov denounced the state of Georgian democracy (*Official Kremlin International News Broadcast* 15 February 2005). Reportedly, the Kremlin was also upset about Bush's 2005 visit to Tbilisi, in which he praised the Georgians as a beacon of democracy in the region, prompting Lavrov to send a letter of protest to Rice (Bumiller and Myers 2005).[11] In early 2006, the Kremlin also took more concrete steps to damage Georgia economically through questionable outages of natural gas supplies during the winter;[12] a boycott of Georgian wine, mineral water, vegetables and other goods for supposed health violations;[13] and a tightening of the visa system between the two countries.[14] These would only be a preview of the near total breakdown in relations between the two countries in the fall of 2006, in which the arrest of Russian military personnel on charges of spying led to a whole host of punitive actions against Georgia and Georgians living in Russia. Despite

the fact that Tbilisi released the soldiers within days and pleaded with Russia to improve relations, Russia continued its sanctions, deepened its ties with Georgia's secessionist provinces, and launched a harsh rhetorical offensive against Georgia. By the end of 2006, the promise of better relations prior to and immediately after the Rose Revolution were dashed.

The shift in Russian-Ukrainian relations following the Orange Revolution was far more dramatic and is rather strong evidence that regime type had a significant impact on Russian policies toward its neighbors. Prior to the colour revolutions, Russian-Ukrainian relations were quite good despite the existence of a number of difficult issues between the two countries, including the status of Russia's Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol, the treatment of Russians in the Crimea and eastern Ukraine, and the related problems of Russian energy exports to Ukraine and Ukraine's financial debt to Russia. A key reason for this was the steady shift away from democracy by Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma. After being implicated in the killing of an opposition journalist, Kuchma found the West closed to Ukraine; by contrast, the Kremlin was open to its increasingly authoritarian neighbor. During his second term, Kuchma promised a 'return to Europe with Russia,' which meant that Kiev's ties with the West would be dependent on Moscow's ties with the West (Kuzio 2003:446). He also weakened Ukraine's commitment to an anti-Russian alliance amongst some former Soviet republics and showed interest in a Russian-dominated alternative to the EU. Consequently, the Kremlin sought to ensure that his chosen successor, Viktor Yanukovych, would be victorious in the 2005 presidential election. When, instead, the Orange Revolution resulted in Viktor Yushchenko's victory, Russian policy toward Ukraine deteriorated sharply.

Although Yushchenko travelled to Moscow in order to repair relations after the divisive election, the Russian officials initiated a series of rhetorical attacks against Ukraine aimed at discrediting the Orange Revolution. This included a May 2005 statement by Igor Ivanov (*RIA Novosti* 10 February 2005) that called the change in regime 'undemocratic' and 'unconstitutional' and a resolution passed by the Russian Duma the same month that raised the issue of political oppression in Ukraine (Novikov 2005). Of course, this was quite ironic since Ukraine had taken an important step toward democracy (in contrast to Russia's path) and the Russian legislature itself had seen its powers and autonomy steadily eroded under Putin. The Kremlin also tried to advance its interests more directly through a formal cooperation agreement between United Russia and Yanukovych's Party of Regions (UNIAN News Agency 2005). A December 2005 Russian demand that Ukraine submit to a five-fold increase in the price for natural gas was a sharp reversal of an August 2004 agreement that was negotiated to facilitate the election of Yanukovych.[15] This dispute led Russia to temporarily cut off gas supplies to Ukraine. During the first months of 2006, Russia-Ukraine quarrels over the Black Sea Fleet and the status of Russian-speakers in Ukraine also flared up again. Only the victory of Yanukovych's party in the March 2006 parliamentary elections helped to calm the situation.

In contrast to the extensive support given to Belarus, Russia's relations with both Georgia and Ukraine deteriorated sharply following the Orange Revolution. This

should not have been surprising. Writing on the impact of regime type on interstate relations, Werner (2000: 347–48) noted that leaders 'have a keen interest in seeing the establishment or the maintenance of governments abroad that strengthen, or at least do not undermine, their position at home' and also have 'a keen interest in undermining governments abroad that pose any threat to their position at home.' Although Russia has a variety of interests in all three countries, the political interests of the Kremlin likely proved critical in determining this divergence in policy.

Cooperate

Authoritarian governments have a common interest in ensuring that democratic diffusion is contained, since none of them will benefit if regime change becomes legitimized. They therefore have an incentive to work together to this end. Within the context of the former Soviet Union, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has been called 'an emerging club of authoritarian states' (Marat 2007). Formed as an outgrowth of Russia-China post-Cold War cooperation and strongly supported by the Kremlin, the SCO has developed into the primary international organization for Central Asia and has advanced a set of regional norms that makes revolution illegitimate, serving as an additional bulwark against democratization.

Neither the 2001 Declaration establishing the SCO nor its 2002 Charter make any mention of democracy. Instead, respect for state sovereignty and non-interference in domestic affairs figured prominently. The importance of preserving regional 'stability' is highlighted repeatedly in both documents. Although this term is not explicitly defined, its meaning can be understood within the context of its application to the events in Central Asia in the months following the Orange Revolution, when the region's authoritarian leaders felt under the greatest threat.

In March 2005, a popular pro-democracy uprising overthrew Kyrgyz President Askar Akayev, who had become increasingly authoritarian since he emerged as the state's first leader in 1991. This Tulip Revolution brought the 'orange plague' directly into the heart of Central Asia, a danger that appeared all the more real when anti-government rioting in the Uzbek city of Andijan erupted. Unlike Akayev, Uzbek President Islam Karimov ordered his soldiers to fire on the unarmed demonstrators, who he claimed sought 'to repeat the coup in Kyrgyzstan' by overthrowing him (Radyuhin 2005). In July 2005, the SCO heads of state met at Astana, Kazakhstan for their annual summit. Although neither Kyrgyzstan nor Uzbekistan were directly mentioned in the summit's official declaration, the document made repeated references to 'stability' and openly supported its members' 'efforts … aimed at providing peace, security, and stability in their territory in the whole region' ('Declaration of Heads …' 2005). While at first this might be an innocuous statement, coming on the heels of the brutal crackdown in Uzbekistan, it could be seen as defending Karimov's actions.

More insightful, however, were a series of statements made by the SCO Secretary-General Zhang Deguang during and after the summit, which provide glimpses into the thinking of the organization. At the summit's plenary session Zhang noted that 'recent events' in the region have:

> … once again shown that terrorism, separatism and extremism still remain to be the most serious threat to peace, security, stability and development in the region. The summit made the right evaluation and properly reacted to the situation in the region. It adopted a decision, which says that the member states will continue to strengthen unity and interaction in their counteraction against 'the three evil forces.' Maintaining peace, security and stability is a matter of top priority [of the organization]'
>
> ('Speech by SCO Secretary-General …' 2005)[16]

Later, Zhang argued that regional stability 'is the common interests of all parties' and rejected calls for democratization in the region, linking the color revolutions to 'extreme measures' and 'chaos' which only aid 'extremist and terrorist forces' ('Address by Secretary-General …' 2005). The fact that Zhang would frame a democratic revolution in Kyrgyzstan and an unarmed protest in Uzbekistan in such a way is revealing.

In addition to promoting stability, the SCO places a strong emphasis on 'diversity'. This word is found in the organization's founding documents, used often by its secretaries-general, and widely supported by its members. Diversity in this sense has come to mean that different paths of development – in particular, democratic and non-democratic – are equally valid and should be respected. According to this formulation, democratic states have no moral right to criticize the political system of any other state. As stated in the July 2005 Astana summit declaration: 'Every people must be properly guaranteed to have the right to choose its own way of development' ('Declaration of Heads …' 2005). Zhang expanded upon this during a 2006 interview: 'We respect the right of each country to choose its own path of socioeconomic development and do not think it is appropriate to interfere in its internal affairs; we do not impose our own model of development or our own model of democracy on anyone' ('Interview by SCO Secretary-General …' 2006). In addition to the term 'impose', Zhang also used the words 'artificial' and 'subjective' in an effort to discredit the universality of democracy ('Secretary-General Answers …' 2005; 'Press Conference …' 2005). This argument was similar to the 'Asian values' disputes of the 1990s, in which Asian autocrats criticized human rights and democracy as inherently 'Western' values and akin to neo-imperialism. The fact that this language was also similar to the Russian concept of 'sovereign democracy', but on a regional scale, is no accident since Putin himself made several statements that connected Western criticism to neo-imperialism.[17]

The SCO's reaction to the 2005 events in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan indicates that the SCO has emerged as a vehicle for setting regional norms that make regime change illegitimate. By emphasizing state sovereignty, stability, and diversity at the expense of human rights and democracy, the organization has shown that its members are not simply passive actors but rather are willing to engage in the rhetorical battle between democracy and autocracy. As one of the two main engines of this organization, Russia has played the role of a 'critical state' (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998: 901) in establishing and reinforcing these norms. Consequently, it

is likely that the prospects for democracy in Central Asia will be lessened because of this coordinated effort.

Conclusion

Once the Rose Revolution was followed by the Orange Revolution, it appeared that a democratic wave might overwhelm the authoritarian regimes of the former Soviet Union. The six strategies outlined in this chapter are but some of the policies adopted by the Kremlin as part of its multifaceted response to undermine or counter democratic trends both at home and abroad. Once 2006 came to an end, the immediate threat of regional contagion was seen as receding. This most directly impacted Russian relations with Belarus, which saw a sharp downturn in relations once Lukashenko passed his presidential election test. Nevertheless, fears that Russia might push Minsk too far (either by forcing it to align with the West or by undermining Lukashenko too much through external pressure) resulted in the Russia offer of a financial aid package in 2007, which included a hefty stabilization loan and lower than market prices for natural gas.

The Kremlin also maintained many of the other policies listed under the remaining strategies. For example, Russian relations with Georgia continued to be quite poor and the brief war between the two countries that erupted in fall 2008 was a further indication that the Rose Revolution remains a proverbial thorn in the Kremlin's side. In Ukraine, a constitutional crisis between the parliament and the president saw Yanukovych lose power and Moscow and Kiev stumble from one natural gas crisis to another over the subsequent years. Russia-Estonia relations nearly collapsed over a dispute over the removal of a Soviet-era statue from the heart of Tallinn, which led to riots and the death of a Russian citizen. The language used to characterize the Estonian government – 'immoral', 'offensive', 'blasphemous', 'monstrous' and 'another chapter of the heroization of Nazism' – indicate that Russia's rhetorical offensive against its western neighbor will likely continue. In Central Asia, the SCO's August 2007 Bishkek summit identified preserving political stability as the organization's most important task. To this end, the organization has expanded its presence through a greater role in election monitoring and joint military exercises.

As the Kremlin prepared for the December 2007 parliamentary and March 2008 presidential elections, it also needed to ensure that its policies of countering the color revolutions were heightened. As a result, the Russian government further sought to discredit Western election monitors and restricted their access to the country, prompting the OSCE to boycott the elections. Pro-democracy NGOs found themselves hindered by a virtual mountain of red tape, government interference, and verbal attacks. By contrast, the pro-Kremlin youth organizations were strengthened and actively prepared to counter a color revolution. During the night of the parliamentary elections, thousands of Nashi members occupied locations throughout Moscow to ensure that no other group could protest there. This was seen as so successful that the group's profile during the presidential election was limited because, as Markov put it, 'there is no possibility of an Orange

revolution and in these condition the Nashi movement is losing its main mission' (Halpin 2008).

The successful 2007–8 election cycle indicates that the Kremlin's strategies against the colour revolutions had paid off. While not solely Russia's doing, the democratic revolutions in the former Soviet Union were limited to three and none of these countries have emerged as a model of stable, liberal democracy. The future of the Russian political system is likely to remain on an authoritarian path as the autocratic trends evident under Putin have become consolidated and it appears that a working relationship between (now) Prime Minister Putin and his successor is firmly in place. Rather than being swept away by a democratic wave, the Russian government, and the region in general, now appears less susceptible to both internal and external democratic pressures.

Notes

1 Though, it should be noted, the Tulip Revolution did not precisely follow the pattern seen in Georgia and Ukraine.
2 There was some looting in Kyrgyzstan, but it is unclear, in fact, who participated in it. Moreover, the democratic credentials of the government which replaced Askar Akayev remains in doubt. Nevertheless, the color revolutions as a whole represented a nonviolent, mass-based example of regime change.
3 The imprisonment of Mikheil Khodorkovsky was seen as a clear example of the costs of opposing the government (Antonov 2005).
4 Eight other CIS members also signed the letter. All were non-democracies, with the exception of Moldova which was rated by Freedom House as a mixed country.
5 This is particularly important because 'competitive authoritarianism' allows elections to be conducted within an electoral environment which is neither free nor fair; thus, the actual election itself may be conducted with a minimum of ballot stuffing and other forms of blatant electoral fraud, but it is fundamentally undemocratic (Levitsky and Way 2002).
6 Other groups include: United Russia's youth wing, the Young Guard; the anti-immigrant organization, Locals; a group aligned with the Russian Orthodox Church called the Georgiyevtsy; and, Young Russia, which was more geared toward direct confrontation with non-government-controlled youth movements through its 'combat division' called the 'Ultras'.
7 Much of the funding for Nashi was provided by business that were either government-aligned already or those who feared being seen as not supporting the government sufficiently.
8 There was some debate about what his row represented. One opinion was that it was either a genuine discomfort over the concept within the Kremlin or an attempt to promote one faction over another in the presidential succession struggle. Others argued that it was really the equivalent of a political pantomime, fabricated for international consumption in order to pretend that open debate still existed in the Russian political system.
9 The situation between Latvia and Russia is roughly the same as between Estonia and Russia. This section will only focus on the latter relationship.
10 By contrast, those individuals and their descendants of any ethnic group or language status who were in Estonia before WWII were given automatic citizenship.
11 The Kremlin later disputed this account.
12 Just days after Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili announced that his country would seek to diversify its energy supplies, two natural gas pipelines from Russia

exploded simultaneously and a high-power electricity transmission tower was blown up later that day.

13 No other country reported similar concerns over the quality of these exports.

14 This was done in response to the Georgian demand that Russian peacekeepers in South Ossetia and Abkhazia receive visas before entering Georgian territory.

15 This claim was made by Andrei Illarionov, a former economic advisor to Putin who broke with the Kremlin over its authoritarian policies (Isachenkov 2005).

16 The 'three evil forces' are terrorism, separatism, and extremism – in reality, they are broadly defined was practically any anti-government activities.

17 See, for example, his statements during the Orange Revolution and just before G-8 Summit in St. Petersburg (RTR Russia TV 2004b; 'Putin Gives Interview . . .' 2006).

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10 Uzbekistan

Matteo Fumagalli and Simon Tordjman

Introduction

This contribution makes use of Beissinger's elite learning model to understand the recent course of events in 'non-revolutionary' Uzbekistan (2004–8). The chapter argues that ruling elites learn from prior examples of political action as much as their opponents do, allowing them to pre-empt possible challenges to their position. The May 2005 Andijan events were neither a failed colour revolution nor an example of civic activism; moreover, no protests have followed electoral frauds in either the parliamentary or presidential elections in 2004 and 2007 respectively, mostly because control over the outcome was pre-emptive. The chapter locates the Uzbek case within the broader set of colour revolutions in order to examine the impact of the 'power of example' on altering political outcomes in the country. We argue that prior experiences of political change in the region and in the former Soviet Union combine with national political configuration to work both in favour and against civic activism, with the incumbents learning how to pre-empt challenges.

Much has been written in academic and policy circles about the colour revolutions, their causes, the actors involved and the short-term implications. Paired comparisons have set successful cases against unsuccessful ones in search of explanations of variance in outcome. While existing explanations contribute to shed light on various aspects of the coloured revolutions, little is said about the process through which elites and counter-elites draw lessons from earlier instances of popular protest and/or regime change (the 'revolutions').[1] Building on Mark Beissinger's work on modular action and the power of example on political outcomes, the chapter examines the de facto hollowing out of the Uzbek political society operated by the regime as an example of a 'process of elite social learning'.

However, the chapter is less another attempt to categorize Central Asian regimes than a contribution to the study of political practices in authoritarian systems. Defined as an effort to limit pluralism (Linz 2000), authoritarianism is a trend through which a system strives to restrain the number of actors involved in the decision-making process and to standardize their different natures. Persistent attempts to deter opposing political movements from emerging, manipulations of electoral processes, restrictions upon individual and political liberties and obstacles to the development of civil society organizations (CSOs) make Uzbekistan one of

the most closed and repressive countries in the region. That is not to say that social plasticity is totally hushed up by governmental attempts to erase any form of dissent from the public sphere. Despite the growing efforts of the Uzbek authorities that have strived to destroy every self-founded organization and replace them by strictly monitored groups, social and political margins still exist and constitute spaces in which embryonic forms of contentious action can develop. However, opposition movements and unrest did not lead to substantial regime change in the country. Since the beginning of the 2000s, the neutralization of political opposition and the atomization of civil society have prevented the 'power of example' to foster 'revolutionary' change in Uzbekistan.

This contribution is structured as follows. The chapter begins by providing a short background to the Uzbek case (or better, the 'non case'). Next, it turns its attention to the analysis of the causes of the colour revolutions that unfolded in the post-Soviet space in 2003–5. It then examines the series of episodes of uprising and protests that have occurred in Uzbekistan, culminating (though crucially not ending[2]) in the so-called 'Andijan events'. There the chapter examines two aspects: the process of social learning by the Uzbek elites and the puzzling hiccup-style waves of uprisings that occasionally take place in the country. How many waves does Uzbekistan need to get to the tipping point? Or, will it ever reach one?

Unlike other colour revolutions, uprisings and protests in Uzbekistan have demonstrated a quintessentially economic nature. Protests in Uzbekistan were staged in reaction to government action, be these the raising of taxes, the relocation of a bazaar, or the introduction of electronic payment in markets. Explicitly political demands remained mostly absent, and protesters often demanded the intervention of the president to impose a solution to the issue, as in the case of Andijan (Hill and Jones 2006). Political authorities have rarely been contested as such; moreover, dissent has been generally expressed in technical and specific terms rather than in global and ideological ones. Beyond the apparent depoliticization of dissent in Uzbekistan, a crucial elite-masses disjuncture has emerged in the country. With the ruling elites increasingly concerned with their survival (political, but also physical) and the cost of defection, the population is left with hardly any voice at all.

Between Frustration and Unrest: the Neutralization of Political Dissent

The break-up of the Soviet Union did not lead to the democratization of post-independence Uzbekistan, but to the consolidation of a new authoritarian regime under an elite structure inherited from the Soviet period. During a short-lived phase (1991–2) Uzbekistan experimented with limited pluralism, which prompted the formation of a nascent party system and a degree of electoral competition (Bohr 1998; Melvin 2000). Despite the pervasiveness of most power practices inherited from the Soviet period, Islam Karimov initially failed to monopolize power and faced the rise of Islamic movements and secular opposition parties.

By setting up new relationships of dependency and nurturing social expectations of state intervention, the Soviet system had reframed the relations between state and

society. Soviet policies and institutions strived to reconfigure elite power relations according to new political identities and an exclusive exercise of power in the hands of the Soviet authorities. The collapse of the Soviet Union led to the destabilization of former political and economic networks, which, in turn, limited the ability of the government to exert a monopolistic power upon the social and political life. However, the repression of opposition through the set-up of a restrictive legal environment, repressive measures and the use of local patronage arrangements and regional elite systems, rapidly led to the establishment of government control over individuals' lives.

Hence, the initial multi-party system turned into a multiparty 'façade' and paved the way for the consolidation of the ruling elites' position. Paradoxically, of all the Central Asian republics (with the notable exception of the 1992–7 civil war in Tajikistan), Uzbekistan is the one that has experienced the highest level of unrest, due for the most part to the revival of religious movements in the Ferghana Valley. The early post-independence period opened with an Islamist challenge coming from vigilantes groups ('Adolat') in the Ferghana Valley flagrantly challenging the authority of the government. In the winter of 1992–3 Adolat sought to establish an Islamic state in the country. The government, initially caught by surprise, launched a strong crackdown, banning the Islamist opposition, and forcing it into exile (first into Tajikistan and later into Afghanistan). A stability of sorts characterized most of the remainder of the decade until 16 February 1999, when bombings in the centre of the capital Tashkent (an assassination attempt against the president) signalled the start of an organized threat mounted by the militant group the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (Haraqat al-Islomi al-O'zbekiston, better known under its Russian name, Islamskoe Dvizhenie Uzbekistana). The IMU was the protagonist of two waves of cross-border incursions of militants from Tajikistan's Tavildera valley into Kyrgyzstani territory in the summers of 1999 and 2000. In August 1999 the militants took the Kyrgyz army by surprise and moved swiftly across the southern Batken province. In August 2000 the attacks were repeated in the same areas, as well as in the Surkhandaryo provinces of southern Uzbekistan. Although the militants never posed a serious challenge to the regime in Uzbekistan, they raised a lot of concern in Tashkent.

After a few years of apparent quiet, a new wave of attacks stormed the country during the spring and summer of 2004. Bombs exploded next to the US and Israeli embassies, in Tashkent's central Orsu market, in Bukhara and other locations in the country, clearly demonstrating that the main targets were Tashkent's foreign policy alliances, as well as main security institutions, seen as particularly corrupt and keener on abusing the population than on maintaining order. The attacks have been presented by the government as evidence that the country was under attack by ('foreign') terrorists willing to overthrow the government and establish an al-Qaeda-aligned Islamic caliphate. The intensity of the threat, the argument went, justified an extraordinarily harsh response.

The Neutralization of Political Opposition

Though of course tragic, political use of violence has been the exception rather than the rule in Uzbekistan. Moreover, what these different attacks demonstrated was the limited appeal of radical organizations among the ordinary population. Collective contentious actions in Uzbekistan show paradoxical features: while the population does not hide its frustration and discontent in the private sphere (Turgunov 2007), political opposition that faces severe repressive measures and suffers from a growing disjuncture with the population remains ineffective in bringing a significant change in the Uzbek power architecture.

Uzbekistan does not have a fully developed repertoire of collective contentious action. Even in the late Soviet period, when in other national territories (SSRs, ASSRs or other) nationalist mobilization unfolded on the streets with tens of thousands of people demanding various measures ranging from the demotion of the communist leadership to the acknowledgement of the national language as the official language, Uzbekistan experienced remarkably little popular mobilization (Beissinger 2002). Movements like 'Birlik' (Unity) and the splinter 'Erk' (Freedom) party voiced demands that echoed those put forward in other parts of the Soviet Union (Lithuania, Estonia, Ukraine), but these movements stemmed from small circles of urban intellectuals whose primary aim was cultural revival rather than the creation of popular movements with mass appeal. When their demands were appropriated by the ruling elites, they quickly slid into political irrelevance. Despite some limited experimenting with multi-partyism and pluralism in the early 1990s, very little has changed since then. After almost two decades of tight government control and restrictions of political freedom, little is left in the country that may resemble an opposition. Most of the leaders from the early independence period, such as Muhammad Salih and Abdumannob Polat are in exile, as are the most militant elements that later constituted the IMU, such as Tohir Yoldash (reported to be in Pakistan) and Juma Namangani (supposedly killed in the November 2001 battle of Kunduz during the US invasion of Afghanistan).

Once in exile, the opposition found itself entangled in two main problems that have made it largely ineffective. First, opposition groups engaged in largely personalized struggles between each other, launching reciprocal accusations of siding with the regime. Second, and ultimately more damaging, exiled groups became increasingly detached from the situation on the ground. Despite a growing international support provided to the nascent Uzbek civil society in the 1990s, CSOs neither manage to fill the gap nor to significantly transform the interactions between popular demands and political responses.

The Depoliticization of Civil Opposition

Although operating in a far from perfect environment, far from what can be found in the West (Stevens 2007), civil society organizations could work in the country at least until 2004. Up to then, they progressively developed operational and advocacy activites aimed to support both the development and the democratization of

the country. Given the magnitude of the health and ecological disaster posed by the drying of the Aral Sea, NGOs used the environment and health sectors as their main gateway to Uzbekistan in the early 1990s.

In the immediate post-independence period, foreign NGOs, GONGO (government-organized non-governmental organizations) like Ecosan, and local NGOs settled in the autonomous region of Karakalpakistan, where they started to implement a wide range of programmes aimed to provide health assistance or enhance environment protection. The field of women's rights and domestic violence constituted the second sector in which a growing number of organizations became involved (Hours 2005: 120). During the 1990s, more than 100 organizations developed in most cities where they supported the emergence of businesswomen associations. Like Atdbirkor Ayol, an organization of businesswomen present in many cities of the country, these associations often combine two types of actions: initiatives supporting the professional (re)conversion of Uzbek women and advocacy practices aimed to improve the condition of Uzbek women.

As a consequence of the consolidation of the authoritarian regime, the non-state sector of Uzbekistan started to face tighter legal restrictions at the beginning of the 2000s. Many CSOs therefore decided to limit the spectrum of their activities and soften the criticism they could address to the regime to secure the continuity of their operational activities (Open Society Institute 2005). These difficulties considerably increased with the growing suspicion of President Karimov toward the possible spread of a color revolution in Uzbekistan, which went along with the strengthening of diplomatic relations between Tashkent and Moscow, while those between the Uzbek and the US authorities were deteriorating.

The Making of the Colour Revolutions

Considering the diffusion of 'color revolutions' in the former Soviet Union, Charles H. Fairbanks defined revolution as a phenomenon combining a significant outcome and a distinctive process: 'Revolution in the strict sense … has a number of essential features. First, there is a public discrediting of the old order, which leads to a quick change of the ruling body … Second, it involves a quick change of the ruling group in the name of, but also by means of, the whole community as represented by its majority. Third, the new rulers are specified and legitimized by a body of doctrine and ideology. Fourth, it installs a new system that is created by the state: the characteristic tendency of revolutions is to seize control of the state and to use the state to produce wider changes' (Fairbanks 2007: 43). Referring to these criteria, the events that unfolded in the post-Soviet space from the autumn of 2003 to the spring of 2005 were certainly not revolutions. Despite cautioning against assuming any democratic outcome emerging from the process, Michael McFaul refers to the colour revolutions as examples of successful 'democratic breakthrough'. At the same time, Tucker notes, the term 'colour revolution' has entered common parlance to encompass those events where 'anti-regime forces were in fact successful in overthrowing the current regime' (Tucker 2007: 536).

In a more cautious way, we will regard them as socio-political processes that

occurred in the post-Soviet space after 2003. More precisely, the term refers to transfers of power within the elite circles that have been qualified as revolutionary by both internal and external actors. These 'revolutions' were more a turnover of political elites than a fundamental transformation of the political and/or social structures.[3] Whereas assessing the democratic feature of the outcome of the colour revolutions would lead to an analytical dead-end, these phenomena constitute a fruitful basis to specify the modes of collective dissent in authoritarian and semi-authoritarian systems. How did the colour revolutions happen? What are their distinguishing features? And, more to the point of this chapter, why did some expected revolutions fail to materialize?

McFaul's Seven Necessary Conditions for a Democratic Breakthrough

Answering these questions suppose to identify the conditions as well as the practices of the main actors involved in these processes. In what is so far the most thorough attempt to specify (and distinguish between) necessary and unnecessary conditions, McFaul finds that seven factors contributed to the making of the colour revolution. These conditions are the following:

- The presence of a semi-autocratic rather than fully autocratic regime;
- An unpopular incumbent;
- A united opposition;
- The ability (by the opposition) quickly to 'drive home' the point that voting results were falsified;
- Sufficient independent media to inform citizens about the falsified vote;
- A political opposition capable of mobilising tens of thousands or more demonstrators to protest electoral fraud;
- Divisions among the regime's coercive forces.

McFaul's factors merge actors and preconditions of the colour revolutions. As these are more extensively discussed elsewhere in this volume, we won't review them in detail. We will rather elaborate on the typology elaborated by Ó Beacháin and Polese in a special issue of the journal *Totalitarianism and Democracy*. They characterize colour revolutions as processes combining five actors and several preconditions: in a relatively tolerant environment where low cost of defection could lead ruling elites to abandon instead of remaining in power, the presence of a political opposition, a population supporting the efforts to delegitimate the ruling elite, NGOs able to encourage popular engagement in political issues, and external actors committed to support political change in the country can favour the eruption of a colour revolution (Ó Beacháin and Polese 2008).

These typologies both underline the conflictual feature of colour revolutions that consist in a non-violent confrontation between the ruling elites and the challengers, in an environment characterized by at least a low degree of political pluralism.

The Ruling Elites

There seems to be a consensus in the literature (Herd 2005; McFaul 2005 and 2007) that semi-authoritarian regimes are more likely to be vulnerable to 'democratic breakthrough' than fully-fledged authoritarian ones. The latter type of regime exerts a pervasive control over society and the political system, leaving very little space for non-government sanctioned political action. To different degrees, all the political systems that were ousted in the period 2003–5 would naturally fall into the category of semi-authoritarian regime.

Two additional necessary conditions lie in the unpopularity of the incumbent and the presence of elite cleavages. The unpopularity of the incumbent could be attributed to different reasons but their ultimate political demise was precipitated by electoral processes. Elections could have been either presidential or parliamentary; they all led to frauds aiming to ensure either the survival in power of the incumbent himself, or the electoral success of an 'appointed heir' (e.g. Yanukovich in Ukraine) or affiliated political party (Georgia, Kyrgyzstan).

As to the elite cleavages, these include both rifts within the political elites and within the coercive apparatus. In the first case, some members previously associated with the regime defected and sided with the opposition, whereas in the second the military and security services appeared divided as to how to respond to the protests and whether to bow to the incumbent's request to repress (Ukraine, Georgia). These divisions do not only provide an opportunity for the challengers who can use demonstration as a relatively safe means to contest the ruling elites. They also contribute to erode the apparent image of unity post-Soviet elites have strived to build around the State and the presidential figures.

Since the independence of the Central Asian Republics, national authorities have penetrated public space both to mould new political identities and specific aesthetics of public participation. During national holidays, public ceremonies, which only gather official guests and representatives of the government periodically, are reminders that participation is designed as a top-down process. These parades do not solely have an entertainment purpose, if any. They serve as a means to strengthen the domination apparatus of the authorities, which seek to give a public image of their cohesion through monolithic and carefully staged public ceremonies. By convincing the public that the verticality of power relations is the only possible form of linking individuals to each other, these parades strive to dissuade citizens from rallying the fluidity of a crowd. These precautions convey and confirm that according to ruling elites, horizontal communication is the first step towards contentious movements. Since, according to Michel Foucault, 'loneliness is the first precondition to absolute submission' (Foucault 1993: 237), in weakening their image and capacity of remaining united against the challengers, divisions within elites make dissent possible and thus weaken their own survival in power.

The Challengers

Symmetrically, it is essential that the opposition is or is regarded as united and cohesive. Divisions within the opposition ranks are one of the major factors hindering the chances of mounting a credible challenge to the regime. As a matter of fact, one of the differences between the failed and the successful revolution in Serbia (1997 and 2000 respectively) lay in the ability of the opposition to present a united front against the regime (Spoerri 2008). Next, the opposition's mobilizing capacity is essential; the opposition should be able to mobilize tens of thousands of demonstrators. The fact that the opposition may either be entirely exiled or that it has no connection with the broader citizenry renders mounting a significant challenge de facto impossible.

To that end, CSO like student groups providing logistical support to the supporters (and protesting themselves), such as Otpor, *Kmara*, Pora, the main opposition parties, and NGOs, can all contribute to mobilize the population against the incumbent in the aftermath of electoral frauds. An aspect that is more closely related to the triggering factor of the protests (electoral fraud) is the capacity to convincingly and promptly convey the message that elections were rigged. For example, in Serbia and Ukraine, the independent electoral-monitoring capabilities of NGOs were crucial (e.g. CeSID, CVU[4]), as they immediately highlighted the rigged nature of the elections. Finally an independent media sector appears to be critical for the unity and the mobilization of opposition groups. In their contribution to make every disappointed citizen feel that 'he is not alone', independent media, be they printed or online, were essential to fuse opposition groups and prompt the population to rally them.

Besides the necessary conditions outlined above, McFaul adds that there were other aspects that occasionally mattered (or were thought to matter), but that in the end proved inessential to the making of the revolution. These included the state of the economy, and more generally the level of the country's economic development, the presence of a split between hardliners and softliners within the regime, and finally the relationship between the opposition and the West. What remains unexamined in McFaul's insightful analysis is the extent to which spillover/demonstration effects also played a role in the unfolding (or not) of the revolutions. In other words, how did transnational linkages contribute to the wave of colour revolutions?

Despite the extensive literature on the international diffusion of norms, the 'power of example' in the case of collective action has been scarcely addressed as such.[5] In 2007, in his first attempt to identify its impact on the emergence of colour revolutions, Beissinger identifies only four 'successful' case studies. That is not to say that the density of transnational networks plays a marginal role in these processes. While transnational activism can prompt the political evolution of a given regime (Keck and Sikkink 1998), the lessons 'learnt' by the incumbents and the actions they take can symmetrically pre-empt similar occurrences in other countries.

The Revolution That Would Not Be

In the spring of 2005 speculations started to mount as to what country would be next in the wave of revolutions, and some indicated Uzbekistan (although Olcott warned that, should there be one, a revolution would not be 'pretty' in Uzbekistan (Olcott 2005)). In light of the existing research on the causes of the colour revolutions there is nothing surprising about the lack of a similar event in Uzbekistan. If the country fit partly with the preceding factors, it also lacked some – though not all – of the most necessary conditions.

- *The presence of a semi-autocratic rather than fully autocratic regime*: Although Karimov's Uzbekistan may not be as reclusive as North Korea or even Turkmenbashi's Turkmenistan, the country is sliding more and more into isolation. In parallel to the diffusion of colour revolutions in the post-Soviet space, the Uzbek regime has relied more extensively on repression and fear as instruments to rule. Since 2003, through a restrictive legal environment, individual intimidations and harsher restrictions upon civil and political liberties, pluralism has been restricted in media, non-governmental and political spheres.
- *An unpopular incumbent*: It is difficult to gauge the extent of President Karimov's unpopularity given the lack of fair elections or surveys or in this regard. However, the unpopularity of the police forces remains at a high level as indicated by the growing number of attacks targeting police stations or policemen in the country since the 2004 bombings in Tashkent and Bukhara.
- *A united opposition*: Over the years and particularly since 2004, the outlets available for airing demands and grievances have been severely limited. Real or alleged (or imaginary) members of secular or Islamist opposition have been regularly arrested, subject to unfair trials and on occasion tortured. In parallel to the de facto silence imposed on the national opposition, the exiled movements have not only been irrelevant inside the country (also owing to the fact that it could not officially operate), but has been split into factional and deeply bitter personalized struggles.

Civil opposition also faces severe difficulties due to the harsh restrictions imposed on NGOs by the Uzbek authorities. It also suffers from a significant disconnection between Western-like CSOs and other networks of solidarity. As Thomas Carothers summarizes it, 'much democracy assistance is overly formal and suffers from a disconnection to the local context' (Carothers 2006: 108). Quoting Olivier Roy, one could then describe the donors' democracy promotion strategy in Uzbekistan as building civil society from the top down and 'from scratch' (Roy 2002): Too politically engaged or too exclusive, religious groups, political parties, local clans and to a lesser extent neighborhood committees have often been excluded from the list of potential beneficiaries of international civil society support. Consequently, CSOs loose their social implantation while they strive to encapsulate an oppositional strategy against the state and traditional clientelistic

networks. They are all the more perceived as outsiders that they gather a new elite, both socially[6] and geographically[7] separated from the rest of the society. In claiming their external feature from local traditional networks to get support from the West, CSOs nurture the paranoiac syndrome that the regime cultivates toward 'Western imperialism'. They also contribute to the fragmentation of opposition forces and to their disjuncture with other influent social networks.

- *The ability of the opposition to quickly 'drive home' the point that voting results were falsified*: Apart from a small OSCE mission that was allowed (and which *unfortunately* got their visas very late), independent electoral observers were not allowed in the country for the last presidential elections (2007). That frauds did take place during electoral processes is almost certain. However, the main problem is that control had been exerted on candidate selection so that only pre-approved parties and candidates could run for the parliament (in December 2004) or for the presidency (December 2007). As a way of consequence, no electoral process yielded protests and they remain perceived as useless means of political expression.
- *Enough independent media to inform citizens about the falsified vote*: Although censorship was formally abolished in 2002/2003, noone would regard the Uzbek media as even partly free. Besides the fact that internet access is limited in the country at a quantitative level, the government requires internet providers to block access to some of the more political websites, including Ferghana.ru, Eurasianet.org, Centrasia.ru, and others.
- *A political opposition capable of mobilizing tens of thousands or more demonstrators to protest electoral fraud*: Even in the late Soviet period and in the first years following the independence, when some degree of political pluralism was allowed, large-scale mobilization was the exception rather than the norm. Due to the general lack of interest for electoral processes and to the tight control on civil liberties, demonstrations are often limited to few participants or target more specific issues, like the one that took place in Andijan.
- *Divisions among the regime's coercive forces*: Although rumours of rivalry within the presidential apparatus and/or ministries have been regularly spread among the population, loyalty to the president has so far been secured. There is no evidence to suggest that either of the apparati, or even the army, would break ranks and turn against the regime.

At the beginning of the 2000s, Uzbekistan was missing most of the necessary conditions that made the other colour revolutions possible. The country was home to a consolidating authoritarian regime, with hardly any apparent rift in the regime, with the opposition entirely emasculated and no independent civil society organizations allowed to exist outside the strict control of the government. However, in many diplomatic, academic and non-governmental circles, Uzbekistan was said, after the Georgian Rose Revolution (2003) to be the next step in the diffusion of revolutionary change in the post-Soviet space. Due to massive international interventions aimed to support the Uzbek nascent civil society and given the relatively

high level of unrest at the beginning of the 1990s, many observers believed that the Uzbek opposition forces could overcome the preceding obstacles to make the authorities accept a higher degree of pluralism in the country. The tragic events that took place in Andijan in May 2005 seem to encapsulate different dynamics, which are worth additional attention. While they were regarded with precaution and confusion by many international actors and analysts, they shed light not only on why revolution has not occurred, but also about the evolution of state-society relations in the country (and Uzbekistan's future prospects). The Andijan events not only display the unwillingness of the Uzbek elite to defect because of the high costs involved. They also reveal the capacity of the Uzbek leadership to learn from prior examples of regime overthrow and pre-empt a similar occurrence.

The Andijan Events

On 13 May 2005 the security forces of Uzbekistan reacted to a protest demonstration that had gathered in the centre of Andijan, a town of about 320,000 people located in the Ferghana valley. The previous night a group of armed men had assaulted the local prison and freed several hundred inmates. Among them were twenty-three local entrepreneurs that the local authorities had jailed on the charge of being part of the 'Islamist' organization Akromiya over the summer of 2004.[8] They were awaiting an imminent verdict. Demanding their release, the local population had assembled in the town centre several times in the preceding months, to no avail, but also meeting no particular reaction from the local authorities. This seemed to be in line with the authorities' response to earlier demonstrations in Andijan during previous months, but also to other expressions of popular frustration in the country. On the morning of 13 May, the insurgents moved on to occupy the local city council (hokimiyat). At the same time a crowd of thousands took to the streets protesting against the government. During the day, President Karimov was said to have flown to Andijan to take control of the events. Having heard of the news, some demonstrators applauded, while others demanded to meet him. Then, abruptly, government forces began a swift crackdown on the demonstrators. Chaos ensued. A curfew was imposed, the region was sealed off from the rest of the country and strict security measures were enforced. Order was restored at a very high price.

In the days following the events a large number of people fled the country. Most of them found temporary refuge in neighbouring Kyrgyzstan, which had itself undergone the Tulip Revolution only six weeks earlier. At the same time demands for an independent investigation began to be voiced by human rights organizations, though they were vehemently rejected by Uzbekistani authorities. Disputes over the course of events, the rationale behind the government crackdown, the identity of the protesters and especially the death toll opened a chasm between the Uzbek official version and that of international organizations. The relations between this post-Soviet republic and western states who, under the pressure of human right organizations, had demanded that Tashkent allow an independent investigation reached the lowest point since independence.

Rapidly after the Andijan events, the government justified its actions as a necessary reaction to tackle a militant insurgency, organised by Islamic radical organizations. The protesters, but also international human rights organizations countered the claim by arguing that unarmed civilians, including children had been shot at. There is no consensus as to what really happened and why (Akiner 2005; Human Rights Watch 2005; International Crisis Group 2005). That hours of intense shooting and street fighting and killing occurred is not disputed by any side; what is contested is the number and identity of people left dead on the ground. According to an official investigation, 187 people, mostly 'terrorists' died, whereas according to international human rights organizations many more, in most cases unarmed civilians, lost their lives because of the government's action. A large part of what happened still remains unclear, mainly as a result of the Uzbekistani government's refusal to allow an independent investigation into the dynamics of events.

A Step Behind: The Road to Andijan

Although many details still remain unclear (mostly because of the government's refusal to cooperate with an international and independent investigation), it should be stressed that the Andijan events, however tragic, did not represent a break with the past. Rather, they should be read as part of a deteriorating state-society relationship fuelled by declining living standards, social discontent and lack of political will from the side of the authorities to recognize this state of events and attempt a remedy. Incidentally, the fact that Uzbekistan's macro-economic indicators are positive overall does not contradict the different reality at a micro-level. The high prices of export commodities such as gas, cotton and gold, may be flowing into the state budget but revenue wealth is not redistributed, except for the token salary and pension increases that precede elections. More broadly, they highlight how the 'social contract' that existed between the state and society, which allowed stability to prevail in the first decade of independence, is now in tatters. As noted below, what happened in Andijan has to be set in a broad context. It was not an attempted (and failed) colour revolution, but yet another instance of an outburst of frustration against the government, coupled with a combination of a terrorist attack (the storming of the prison and the attack on the government building) and a harsh crackdown in response.

It is impossible to make sense of the Andijan events without looking at the larger picture of the post-independence difficulties experienced by both state and society. Though the government allowed limited multipartyism soon after independence, democracy has remained at a mere façade level, with power and decision-making being the domain of narrow elite circles. The economic downturn plunged most Uzbeks into poverty while privatization benefited only a few. With the state failing to act as social safety net, many ordinary citizens had to resort to alternative means to cope with economic duress. Thus, as Kandiyoti noted, the key to understanding what happened in Andijan lies in the breakdown of the social contract between state and society whereby the former is experiencing a 'crisis in provision, legitimacy and security' (Kandiyoti 2005).

By setting up new relationships of dependency and nurturing social expectations of state intervention, the Soviet welfare system reframed the relations between state and society, which partly explains the post-independence trajectories of Central Asian political regimes. Soviet policies and institutions strived to reconfigure elite power relations according to new political identities. They also reoriented the expectations of the population towards public or quasi-public structures for providing welfare services. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the demands of the population still target state structures as the main provider of welfare services. According to Kelly McMann, 'although most post-Soviet governments do not manage public life to the extent that the Communist regime did, states continue to shape expectations of [the population] and civic activists' (McMann 2004: 214).

If the benefit structure of the Uzbek welfare system is still based upon a universal basis, its financing mechanisms face severe difficulties to keep working due to the economic crisis that Central Asian states have faced since their independence. The actors in charge of the welfare system have also changed, turning from a state regulation to the apparent empowerment of makhalla,[9] village or residential committees as organisms in charge of welfare provision at the local level. However, Soviet welfare systems have not been radically reformed and the apparent revival of traditional practices and the devolution of state power to local committees still contribute to a certain government control over individuals' lives. Given the growing incapacity to equate public responses to social demands of welfare, the background to the tragic events of 2005 lies therefore in the convergence between the progressive impoverishment of the population as testified by declining living standards (economic insecurity), the lack of safety valves for 'letting off steam ' (social insecurity) and the state's fear of any form of opposition and subsequent clampdown on it accompanied by declining state authority and legitimacy (political insecurity). This has created a state of fear and powerlessness among the population, which, deprived of any legal outlet for airing grievances, has leaned towards various forms of opposition, some 'silent' and non-violent, others more intolerant and violent. A glance at the post-independence era suggests that Uzbeks have typically resorted to limited forms of protest, due to over-arching structural constraints. When these have taken place, they have traditionally taken the shape of street demonstrations and pickets. The bitter irony is that the entrepreneurs under arrest did not engage in any known violent activities. They were part of the group or network that became known as Akromiya, whose members were mainly engaged in mutual help activities and happened to share strong religious beliefs. Pooling resources for the common good constituted a way of getting around intense economic pressure from the state. It is likely that the group's successful attempts to provide real-life alternatives to the failures of the government made them an even bigger threat to the Karimov regime, as they blatantly demonstrated the shortcomings of the regime. This suggests that the Andijan events have less to do with radical Islam, however much strength this may have gained in the country in recent years, and more with the state's incapacity to comply with the expectations towards its share of the social contract.

In that sense, the Andijan events should be viewed more in terms of continuity

rather than dramatic change. They were not an aborted revolution but undoubtedly nurtured a sense of frustration among the population, which goes along with the intensification of the fear felt by the Uzbek citizens. What seems to have changed in the case of Andijan was less the nature of the demonstrators' claims than a specific international context that nurtured both the strategies and the actions taken by the demonstrators and the authorities.

Beyond Andijan: Elite Politics in Uzbekistan and the 'Power of Example'

The transnational linkages created between youth groups and CSOs led many observers to study the cross-case influences in the different political processes that took place during 'electoral revolutions' in the post-Soviet space. Contrary to traditional revolutionary practices, 'color revolutions' exist only in relation with each other. According to Beissinger, the power of example has allowed 'some groups that might be less structurally advantaged to engage in successful action by riding the influence of the prior example to others' (Beissinger 2007: 263). Beside electronic exchanges among activists, regional centres such as the Belgrade-based Center for Non-violent Resistance provided training to young activists from Belarus (Zubr), Georgia and Ukraine. Kyrgyz Kel-Kel's leaders also met Ukrainian Pora activists during electoral monitoring in Kiev and in several forums supported by the Open Society Institutes' network.

However, as Beissinger notes, it is one thing to acknowledge that these types of political actions are not a collection of unrelated cases and quite another to argue that 'modular action [of which the coloured revolutions are an example] (…) is based in significant part on the prior successful example of others' (253). In his analysis of how prior examples affect behaviour and outcome across cases, Beissinger shows that alongside the positive case of cumulative examples reaching a tipping point whereby structural constraints are replaced by mutual empowerment (which allows the overcoming of disadvantages imposed by the context), 'institutions can respond to modular processes in a different way' (Ibid: 269). This is what he calls the 'elite learning model', namely the process by which the elite learn critical lessons from other examples, and from their successes and failures.

The argument holds that after the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004, a tipping point was reached where movement formation spread rapidly across groups. Moreover, despite the fact that in some cases groups faced significant institutional constraints and overall structural disadvantages, the emulation of prior successful examples spread laterally and this resulted in 'mutual empowerment' across cases and across groups. This effect of example on political outcomes, Beissinger notes, can then take two very different courses, depending on what actors are involved and how institutions respond to this 'power of examples'. These are what Beissinger refers to as elite defection model (EDM) and elite learning model (ELM). In the former case (EDM) the acceleration of modular action (colour revolutions) demoralizes the ruling elites, but also shows that initial structural disadvantages can be overcome, and that the costs of defection decrease significantly. This leads

to elites defecting and bandwagoning with the challengers. As Beissinger notes: '… established elites entertain doubts about their own legitimacy and the future of structures they are defending, so that a demonstration of the vulnerability of such structures in other contexts leads them to co-opt opposition demands or to seek to bail out before it becomes too late' (269).

This raises two distinct sets of questions: first, when it comes to Uzbekistan, what role, if any, is there for oppositional politics in the country? And second, what has the Uzbek leadership learnt from events in post-communist Eurasia in 2003–5? The EDM tells us little about the evolution of events in Uzbekistan in the period of the colour revolutions, 2000–2005. This of course does not mean that the model itself is not useful, but that its applicability to the Uzbek case is limited since defection has proven to be particularly costly in the country. The ELM, instead, appears more relevant. As Stevens notes, politics in Uzbekistan takes place outside of formal political channels (Stevens 2007). Restricting one's focus on political parties would only give the impression that little if anything is happening in the country. Instead, politics takes place between networks of elites who compete for resources at local and national level.[10] In Uzbekistan it is possible to identify the following regional groupings that have traditionally competed for power: those from the Tashkent elite group; Samarkand-Bukhara; FAN (Ferghana-Andijan-Namangan); and Surkhandaryo and Qashqadaryo. The area around Khorezm and Karakalpakstan in the western part of the country has remained outside of the big political struggles. At the same time, acknowledging that informal politics plays a crucial role in the country should not lead us to overestimate the extent to which intra-elite conflict can come to the surface, let alone turn into an open challenge to the incumbent. This arises from two main issues. First and foremost the costs of defection in fully consolidated authoritarian regimes are extremely high. Countries like Turkmenistan or Uzbekistan have forced the main political opponents into exile (when they have not been jailed). The main leaders from the late Soviet and early post-Soviet period have moved abroad (Polat and Solih), militant leaders moved to Tajikistan during the war and then on to Afghanistan and Pakistan (Yoldash). Other figures that at some point seemed to present an alternative voice (Sanjar Umarov and the Sunshine Coalition) faced sudden charges and were subsequently sentenced to several years of imprisonment. Second, Henry Hale's observation that intra-elite cleavages turn into open conflict and challenges only if and when the president enters into a lame-duck period, appears particularly pertinent to the understanding of the pre-revolutionary dynamics across post-communist Eurasia. In the case of Ukraine, for example, it appeared clear that the incumbent was not searching re-election, thus opening a window of opportunity for challengers. This was never the case in Uzbekistan, where who was in command was never in doubt. President Karimov was first elected in 1991 and then subsequent elections in 2000 and 2007 allowed him to extend his tenure. A referendum held in 1995 extended his first term in office. The only question regarding his desire to remain in office further seemed to emerge in 2007. With his second (and last, according to the constitution) term formally expiring in January 2007 and no sign of any presidential election in sight, speculations mounted about the president's

intentions. As Karimov did not openly refer to the possibility that he may eventually step down, the possibility that he might appoint a successor in the manner of the Yeltsin-Putin succession was raised abroad. In this case, Karimov's daughter Gulnora was often indicated as the successor, thus pointing to possible dynasticism similar to what had happened in Azerbaijan in 2003, when Ilham Aliev succeeded his father Heydar. In the end, however, Karimov confirmed his candidacy, formally accepting the nomination of the Liberal-Democratic Party in November. Despite the legal 'ambiguity' of the elections, he was re-elected with 88 per cent of the popular vote on 23 December 2007. Karimov's acceptance of the nomination put an end to speculation over political succession, which had constituted one of the triggering factors behind the other colour revolutions. Neither before nor after the elections did protests take place.

Protests in the streets of the cities of Uzbekistan had a unique character in that they originated in economic grievances, and cannot be taken in isolation from a broader international context. This is obviously not because they were in any way linked to the popular movements that had filled the streets of Belgrade, Tbilisi, Kiev and more recently Osh and Bishkek. The motives, actors and demands were different. However, and this is crucial, they were perceived as part of a broader western-backed plot to overthrow regimes in post-communist Eurasia by the Uzbek leadership. As a result, what matters for the scope of this analysis is not that the events of May 2005 (and the lead-up to them) in Uzbekistan were not yet another (attempt of a) colour revolution, but they were perceived or better articulated as one by the leadership of the country.

The first Rose Revolution in Georgia had raised eyebrows among the ruling elites in Tashkent. Following his dismissal, the former Georgian president, Chevarnadsé, visited Uzbekistan in person to alert the Uzbek president on 'revolutionary' movements that had emerged from the beginning of 2003 in the former Soviet space. When the events in Ukraine in the winter of 2004 showed that the Rose Revolution was not an isolated event, Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov drew his conclusions and stated in an interview with the Russian newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* in January 2005 that such a revolution would not occur in the country: 'I hope we do not get to this [overturning of power] and that in Uzbekistan there will be no repetition of events in Georgia and Ukraine. People should understand what is being prepared for them and resist such plans. Otherwise, they will regret it' (Panfilova 2005). Be the Andijan events revolutionary or not, the Uzbek authoritarian leadership reacted as if it was the case in implementing the lessons coming from the various colour revolutions that had already taken place. In the same interview Islam Karimov gave in 2005, he stresses that he would not let the Kyrgyz example take place in his country: 'any external influence will be effective only if we permit it to be effective' (Panfilova 2005). Thus, in 2005, the crackdown on local NGOs was intensified, so that a year after the Andijan events and the Kyrgyz Rose Revolution, an American diplomat recognized that 'following the Andijan events, although the Europeans took concrete and severe sanctions against the Uzbek regime, the Americans, through the closure of their NGOs, were the main target of the repression … The authorities regard American organizations as

the main revolution providers although our programs aimed to support civil society are only a small part of our cooperation programs'.[11]

This crackdown on the independent local NGO sector had already started at the end of 2003 when, in the wake of Georgia's Rose Revolution, the government sought to bring NGO activity under its control (Open Society Institute 2005). Through new administrative obligations and new competences attributed to national institutions, the authorities enhanced their control upon the development of the NGO sector.[12] After the Andijan events, a new step was passed with the creation in June of the government-controlled NGO Association, to which all NGOs must belong. According to independent sources, in August 2005 alone around 200 NGOs closed due to the refusal of the Ministry of Justice to provide them with re-registration. According to most conservative estimates, more than 60 per cent of all active NGOs have been closed down during 2005 alone. Among them, the organizations operating in the fields of democratization, human rights and independent media were the first targets of the government's policy: the Open Society Assistance Foundation, BBC, RFE/RL, Internews and Freedom House all had to close and/or leave the country by the end of 2005.

The lesson drawn from the Kyrgyz, and to a lesser extent other colour revolutions, was that any sign of weakness (reform or negotiation with the opposition) would be a first step toward the end of the regime. In a provocative manner, Karimov expressed this idea in the 2005 interview when he was asked to interpret the demonstrations that were taking place in Kyrgyzstan: 'It worries us … that the danger of another coup is apparent in Kyrgyzstan now. Akayev said as much in his speech. He also identified the West as the source of money used to cover the 'shortage of democracy'. I ask him: if what you are saying is so indeed, why are you not doing something about it? He says he is helpless. What else can I say?' (Panfilova 2005). It is as part of this understanding that the crackdown on NGOs and the government's repression of the 2005 Andijan revolt should be interpreted. President Karimov was expecting an attempt to oust him and reacted by imposing further restrictions on civil society (political opposition being by and large already absent). This, it turned out, was based on a misreading of the situation in the country, but fuelled a response that in any case pre-empted any such an attempt.

Andijan and its Aftermath

What awaits Uzbekistan and its citizens? However tragic, the Andijan events do not represent a rupture with the past. Quite the contrary, they 'merely' constitute the latest episode in the deterioration of state-society relations. State and society have begun to isolate from each other. While the former now tends to see any instance of popular expression as evidence of an imminent threat to its survival, the latter has developed an explicit distrust and fear of the state. Repeated episodes of popular protest and more rare, but increasingly frequent, violent outbursts of resistance point to a state increasingly out of tune with its own population.

By cracking down in such a ruthless way, along with generating a sense of widespread fear across the whole population, the government reaction may have

achieved the objective of sending a message that similar acts of resistance (let alone a 'revolution') would not be tolerated. For months, in fact, protesters remained dormant and protests stayed underground. Gradually, nevertheless, new acts of protests resurfaced in the country, over the summer of 2005 in Samarkand and with women-only peaceful demonstrations across the streets of Andijan in January 2006. In the spring of 2008 hundreds of people demonstrated in the city of Urgench against the relocation of the local bazaar. Three years after Andijan, state and society have not shown signs of reconciliation.

However, the growing split between the elites and the population have lead neither to the unification of opposition groups nor to an increased politicization of popular claims. While frustration is growing in the country, the elimination of civil organizations, the obstacles to public association and the disconnection of both political and civil opposition forces from the rest of the population still contribute to the status quo of the political regime. According to Guzzini's 'interpretivist' theory of political dynamics (Guzzini 2000). The political refers to a specific kind of social relation that is dependent on the representations of the actors involved. Thus, the political is always induced by a process of politicization defined as 'the process of transformation of societal problem into a political problem' (Braud 1998: 581). Hence, social actors can foster the (de-)politicization process without being conscious thereof. According to this perspective, the crackdown of opposition forces in Uzbekistan is not contradictory with the persistence of some forms of collective action. Since they mostly target 'technical' measures and concrete cases, the latter paradoxically contribute to the larger dynamics of (de-)politicization that affect the country and weaken the pervasiveness of oppositional political parties.

Conclusion

In the various manifestations of the colour revolutions, cross-case influence (Beissinger's 'power of example') played a significant role in helping opposition groups overcome significant structural disadvantages and overthrow the incumbent. This became particularly evident after the 2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine. Among the late-comers in the revolutionary tide, the ruling elites learnt something too. Elite learning and 'fightback' altered the transnational context created by the wave of revolutions making it more difficult for challengers to oust the regime. The case of Uzbekistan well illustrated this point. Not only did Uzbekistan not experience a colour revolution, as is well known, but it also imposed tighter restrictions on civil society. This did not lead to a decrease of the discontent of the population, but on the contrary nurtured itsfrustration. On the whole, it is not surprising that no revolution occurred in Uzbekistan because most of the preconditions indicated by Michael McFaul (2005 and 2007) were missing. What is noteworthy, however, is that the Uzbek leadership has shown that ruling elites learn from prior examples as much as opposition movements do. As scholarship on repression points out, a crackdown is typically followed by a lull, a period when fear is at such a level that the population does not want to risk any further repression. That fear is widespread in the country is beyond dispute. However, and this

is striking, protests soon resurfaced. Overall, Uzbekistan's ruling authorities have succeeded in two remarkable exercises of political action: they have hollowed out the Uzbek political and civil societies through effective repression and have made

Notes

1 For a notable exception see M. R., Beissinger, 'Structure and Example in Modular Political Phenomena: The Diffusion Bulldozer/Rose/Orange/Tulip Revolutions', in *Perspectives on Politics*, 5(2): 259–76, 2007, and H. E. Hale, 'Democracy or autocracy on the march? The colour revolutions as normal dynamics of patronal presidentialism', in *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 2006, 39: 305–29.
2 As will be shown popular dissatisfaction reached a climax in Andijan both in the extent of the uprising and the crackdown that followed, but the events constitute a far from unique case in the country's history. Moreover, despite the predictable silencing that the crackdown imposed, smaller scale episodes of protest and dissatisfaction continued, starting as early as the summer and winter of 2005 (Samarkand and Andijan; rfel and ferghana.ru) and more recently in Urgench in the Spring of 2008 (bbc news).
3 In the case of Kyrgyzstan, see Doten (2007)
4 The Committee of Voters of Ukraine is registered as an independent NGO, non-affiliated with political parties and election blocs. Its main activities concern elections monitoring, civic education and civil society support (source: www.cvu.org.ua; last accessed: September 2009). The Center for Free Elections and Democracy (CeSID) is a no-partisan organisation formed in 1997 at the university in Belgrade by professors and student protestors. Since its creation, it has sought to extend democratic government in Serbia/Montenegro (source: www.cesid.org; last accessed: September 2009)
5 Beissinger (2007) primarily, but the issue is also touched in Hale (2006)
6 CSOs' staff is mainly composed of young domestic academics and intellectuals presenting 'language ability, bureaucratic competence and the capacity to understand what foreign NGOs want. (. . .) The fact that many intellectuals have few real links with networks and groups of solidarity give to their new employers the (often correct) impression that they are independent-minded' (Ibid., p. 142)
7 CSO are often located in the 'new neighbourhoods' of the cities. Thus, they are explicitly and geographically disconnected with other urban solidarity spheres like makhallas [i.e. traditional committees in charge of social and redistributive actions at the neighbourhood level]. Their location near international hotels, foreign embassies and official building also deepens their lack of social implantation and sometimes fosters their image of imperialism that national authorities use to discredit them.
8 For more on Akromiya see Ilkhamov (2006).
9 Makhalla are Uzbek neighborhood committes which have progressively shifted from a social formation to an administrative, political and ideological unit (Read, 2000).
10 For a similar point and the role of regionalism as inherited form the Soviet period see P. Jones Luong ed., *The Transformation of Central Asia: States and Societies from Soviet Rule to Independence*, Cornell University Press, 2004.
11 Interview held by the author with an American Diplomat on the condition of anonymity, Tashkent, 2006.
12 At the end of 2003, new measures were adopted by the authorities to control the activities and the development of NGO in the country. Since then, international donors have to seek approval from the Ministry of Justice for all events (conferences, seminars, workshops, etc.) that they organized; all international NGOs, previously accredited by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have to re-register with the Ministry of Justice; and a new review committee has been empowered to block the transfer of grant funds from international donors in case of 'frauds'. Moreover, if the NGO showed no banking

activity, they can be forced to close by the Ministry of Justice on the pretence that would be 'inactive'.

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11 Tajikistan[1]

Robert Kevlihan and Amri Sherzamonov

Introduction

Since 1998, Eastern Europe and the post Soviet states of the CIS have had a fourth wave of so-called color revolutions, whose intent has been to initiate processes of political change and (at least rhetorically) greater democratization within the affected states. These episodes have generally comprised short sharp bursts of largely non-violent political acts aimed at the replacement of incumbent governments. While these contentious events in the former Soviet space have attracted the attention of journalists and scholars alike, there has been less focus on those states in the former Soviet space where such events have not occurred, particularly when political circumstances have aligned to present the increased possibility of a contentious episode.

This chapter seeks to explain a case where no effort at a color revolution occurred during this sequence of contentious episodes, despite the presence of a number of factors that on the face of it, should have made a color revolution much more likely. The key period in question is 2005, and the country is Tajikistan. While one would expect under normal circumstance that the task of a political scientist should be to explain why a revolution actually occurred, rather than why the political situation in any given country was relatively placid, the political scene in Central Asia in 2005 was far from normal. Politically, this was a tumultuous year in the region, chiefly because of events in Tajikistan's close neighbor, Kyrgyzstan, where street protests in March 2005 culminated in the ousting of that country's leader, Askar Akiev, and later protests and violence in May 2005 in Andijan, Uzbekistan, where public protest and incipient collective violence were ruthlessly suppressed by the government there. The puzzle considered in this chapter can be put succinctly as follows: given these episodes in neighbouring states, why did nothing similar occur in Tajikistan at the same time?[2]

On the face of it, the risks of street protests should have been at least as high as in Kyrgyzstan. In contrast to the neighbouring Central Asian states of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, both Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are relatively resource-poor countries, and as such, governments in these states are less able economically to maintain regime stability. In addition, by coincidence, electoral cycles in Tajikistan happened to be closely synchronized with those of Kyrgyzstan in 2005. The period of unrest began in Kyrgyzstan in March 2005,

while parliamentary elections in Tajikistan were in process – having been conducted in two stages on 27 February and 13 March 2005. This coincidence is noteworthy given that public mobilizations in response to flawed election results appears to be an important component of successful color revolutions (Beissinger 2007: 263–64, Tucker 2007: 536–37); elections in both countries were plagued by voting irregularities. However, in contrast to Kyrgyzstan and despite presiding over elections that were not considered free and fair by the OSCE, the Tajik government faced no major civil disturbances in response to its election results.

The chapter is divided into two parts. The first reviews the often forgotten history of contentious politics in Tajikistan, highlighting the path-dependent nature of political and social dynamics when it comes to understanding the potential for new waves in the contemporary context. The second part reviews the events of 2005 when the risk of unrest in Tajikistan was arguably at its highest and seeks to explain the lack of any revolutionary episode.

While any analysis of counter factual history (i.e. why some event did not occur) is inevitably somewhat speculative, this chapter argues that the complete absence of any effort at contentious politics in 2005 was primarily due to Tajkistan's past experience of contention and collective violence and to governmental measures – including credible threats of violence – designed to reduce the possibility of collective mobilization. Diffusion of contentious political mobilization repertoires, while important in explaining processes of contentious politics during colour revolutions, only contributes to situations of collective mobilization where conditions on the ground are relatively favorable. While external forces can persuasively explain the timing, if not the outcome, of political reform in relatively weak states (Lewis 2002: 298), a focus on external forces alone ignores the salience of domestic conditions and the importance of interactive political and social effects related to these two interconnected fields in influencing political outcomes. The chapter concludes that external forces, including political conditions in neighboring states, did not determine the trajectory of political reform in Tajikistan in 2005, despite the weakness of the Tajik state, because of its recent experience of civil war. Political stability, even authoritarian stability, rather than contention, remained the primary pre-occupation of most Tajiks, including political elites associated with the opposition. The perceived potential costs of any collective action similar in method to the 1991–2 period was simply too high to warrant a return to street politics in the Tajik context in 2005.

Contentious Politics in Tajikistan

The beginning of public politics in modern Tajikistan can be dated to the late 1980s and the growth of cultural and religious movements in the wake of perestroika, whose initial aims focused on the revival of Tajik culture and/or Islamic practices. While covert Islamic networks survived or developed during the Soviet period in some parts of the country (Akiner and Barnes 2001, Roy 2001: 54–56), public manifestations of quasi-political activity in Tajikistan can be dated to the end of the 1980s, initially associated with concerns for the revival of the Tajik language

(Juraeva 1996: 260). A number of organizations developed during this time, including the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP), the Democratic Party of Tajikistan (DPT), 'Rastokhez' (Revival) and 'La'li Badakhshon' (The Ruby of Badakhshan) and were later to form, to varying degrees, the basis of opposition to the government. Opposition objectives varied from promotion of a titular national identity (as with Rastokhez), to personal and public Islamic renewal (IRP), to securing the interests of particular minorities – notably Pamiris (La'li Badakhshon). By the end of the Soviet period, Tajikistan (or at least the capital Dushanbe) had an active intellectual scene, despite emerging social problems associated with the decline of support from Moscow and risks of spillover from Afghanistan (Akiner 2005: 129). As with all other Central Asian countries, the break-up of the Soviet Union led to independence for Tajikistan in 1991. However, unlike the other four Central Asian Republics (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan), in Tajikistan independence came in the midst of large-scale mass demonstrations, extensive public mobilization and contention (Brill Olcott 1999: 248). Events surrounding independence in Tajikistan involved many of the actors that were later to play a role in the civil war. Most proximately, independence was preceded by the resignation on 27 August 1991 of the Chairman of the Tajik Supreme Soviet as a result of demonstrations in which the opposition Democratic Party of Tajikistan (DPT) took a leading role (Akiner and Barnes 2001). After a temporary interlude, the seat of Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Tajik SSR was occupied by a former Soviet Tajik leader, Rahmon Nabiev.

As a consequence, a new wave of opposition demonstrations began, demanding reforms in governmental structures. On 1 October 1991, Nabiev temporarily resigned but regained power in the presidential elections of 25 November 1991 in a process considered to be relatively free and fair by Central Asian standards (Akiner 2005: 129). It is around this time – late 1991 – that the first reports emerge of armed elements being formed amongst opposition groups – most closely associated with the IRP (Olimova and Olimov 2001). This election did not result in political stability. Instead, from the end of 1991 into mid-1992 a series of confrontations between rival groups – rapidly split along regional lines – led to a national political stand off. The stand-off began to be framed in religious terms from 1992 onwards, when the respected Islamic leader, Akbar Turajonzoda, joined the opposition coalition of parties (Atkin 1997: 337), although the religious discourse used by elements of the opposition did not signify a radical transformative Islamist political agenda on the part of the IRP or, indeed, of the opposition more generally (Akbarzadeh 1997: 164).

By the spring of 1992, the new government had begun to purge the administration of people considered potentially disloyal; the purge took on an ethnic and religious tinge when Safarali Kenjaev (the speaker of the Supreme Soviet) publicly accused the Minister of Internal Affairs, General Mamadayoz Navjavonov, of corruption, discrimination and incompetence in dealing with public riots. Kenjaev stressed the Pamiri origins of the General Navjavonov, effectively questioning the validity of his Tajik nationality (Akbarzadeh 1996: 1,111). The entire accusatory process was broadcast on local television, while the charges against Navjavonov

were taken as personal insults by many people of Pamiri origin. As a consequence, on 23 March 1992, a mass demonstration was held in Shahidon (Martyrdom) Square in central Dushanbe, initially by Pamiris protesting the government's treatment of Navjavonov, but subsequently backed by a coalition of opposition parties. Protestors demanded the resignation of Kenjaev, who was accused of discrimination against Pamiris, and reinstatement of Navjavonov to his previous position.[3] Leaders of the Democratic Party of Tajikistan, Rastokhez, Islamic Renaissance and La'li Badakhshon signed an official document to protest against the dismissal of Navjavonov and imprisonment of Dushanbe mayor, Maqsud Ikramov, who had been accused of illegally removing a statue of Lenin from the city (Akbarzadeh 1996: 1,111–12; Human Rights Watch 1993: xvi).

The number of protesters steadily increased in Shahidon Square as Dushanbe rapidly became the focus of national contention, and demands were widened, calling for regime change, with demonstrators mobilized to come to the capital from Gharm (where the IRP had strong support), the Pamirs and other regions (particularly in southern Tajikistan) inhabited by Gharmis and Pamiris. One account of mobilization in the Shahtruz area in the far south of Tajikistan recalled the arrival of IRP activists to the town as part of this mobilization – a number of young men responded by travelling to Shahidon Square, while those who remained were criticized for their inactivity.[4] Others interviewed in the Kurgan Teppa and Vakhsh regions of southern Tajikistan (where the first fighting of the civil war actually broke out in early summer 1992) remember watching reports of the demonstrations on TV and thinking that it was purely a Dushanbe affair.[5]

Meanwhile, although opposition parties (particularly the smaller parties based on the intelligentsia such as the DPT and Rastokhez) mobilized local people in Dushanbe, and some university students with regional ties were also active, many Dushanbe residents were somewhat bemused by the demonstrations and the influx of non-residents from other parts of the country. The publicly Islamic character of some of the Shahidon demonstrators, particularly those of Gharmi origin, was also unsettling to many; local residents adjacent to Shahidon Square remembered people politely knocking on their doors asking for washing facilities before prayers, distributions of bread by 'white beards' and in the case of at least one school-aged girl, feeling uncomfortable in her school uniform walking through the square.[6] Not all opposition supporters were quite so mild. Another interviewee recalled a small group of young men stopping buses en route to a local hospital and haranguing women considered to be inappropriately dressed.[7] However, this was also a time of great possibilities for many Tajiks – in the words of one person interviewed, who was a university student in Dushanbe at the time, people saw the demonstrations as a step towards democracy and a better life, never imagining what was to come.

Unfortunately for Tajikistan, lack of effective leadership during this crucial time proved its undoing. Instead of engaging and dealing with the concerns of a relatively important segment of the population, Nabiev's government decided on a more confrontational approach. However, the government's capacity was weakened to such a degree that the nature of this confrontation was indirect, further contributing to political fragmentation. Pro–government supporters organized

a counter-demonstration in Ozodi (Freedom) Square, which is located around 200 metres from Shahidon Square and is separated from it by a single straight stretch of Rudaki Avenue, the main street in Dushanbe. Mainly young demonstrators were mobilized from the southern Kulyob district in support of what still constituted a northern (Leninabodi) dominated government. Transportation and financial support for those mobilized from Kulyob and other provinces was provided by the government, with the aim of creating an effective counter protest to that of the opposition. Occupants of Ozodi Square demanded the reinstatement of Kenjaev, who was forced to resign after parliamentary deputies were taken hostage by an opposition group. On 1 May, Nabiev issued a decree on the establishment of an extraordinary battalion of the National Guard (Gordi Milli) and distributed 1,800 units of automatic weaponry among the pro-government masses on Ozodi Square. An armed clash between the two opposing sides subsequently occurred on 5 May in the suburbs of Dushanbe. A compromise reached by 10 May resulted in the establishment of the Government of National Reconciliation. However, this new government failed to establish its authority over an increasingly fractious situation and was declared unconstitutional by Leninabod and Kulyob districts, while Nabiev proved ineffective as a leader, allegedly in large part because of alcohol abuse (Whitlock 2003: 164). The national battalion refused to give up its arms and fled to Kulyob, where they became actively engaged in the formation of the Popular Front under Sangak Safarov.[8] This resulted in an attempted blockade of Kulyob town by opposition forces.[9] The government of Nabiev was no longer capable of maintaining control in this southern district (the account above draws from Human Rights Watch (1993: xv-xxiii) and Akbarzadeh (1996: 1110–12) and Lynch (2000: 152–53)).

By the summer of 1992 the government had collapsed, while events had shifted away from largely peaceful episodes of mass contentious to more forceful action. Fighting began in southern Tajikistan in June 1992 in the Vaksh region and continued until November, with Kulobi and allied forces, supported by Uzbekistan, gaining the upper hand from September onwards. It is around this time that the current president of Tajikistan, Emomali Rahmon (then known as Rahmonov) came to prominence, taking a leadership position in the government. While the most violent phase of the war occurred from the summer of 1992 until early 1993, the war itself dragged on until 1997. In the end it claimed between 60,000 and 100,000 lives. The war finally ended with the implementation of the provisions of a peace agreement in 1997, although sporadic outbreaks of violence continued into the post-conflict period (Abdullo 2001; Grant Smith 1999: 244–46).

Character of the State and Governing Regime

Aside from the short-term effects of the conflict itself, in the medium term the shadow of this civil war has cast a pall over Tajik politics and society more generally. The ten plus years since the end of the civil war have been characterized by a consolidation of power by President Rahmon and his (mainly Kulyobi) supporters, with informal social networks based on regional ties often exercising greater power

than the formal institutions of government (Akiner 2002: 172; Zoir and Newton 2001). The nature of governance in Tajikistan has been described by one commentator as hybrid clan/nomenklatura/mafia construct (Rubin 1998: 130–31). Dubbed 'clan politics' by another theorist (Collins 1999, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006), the processes involved echo the kinds of 'clientilistic' politics, describing the so-called shadow states common in the neo-patrimonialist literature on Africa. With respect to its formal political institutions, post war Tajikistan remains a pseudodemocracy (Diamond 1999: 54), characterized by pro forma elections processes that fail to meet even basic international standards of openness and fairness.

In processes similar to other Central Asian states, power in Tajikistan has been concentrated in the hands of the president, while the president himself has become increasingly entrenched in his position and does not look likely to willingly cede power anytime soon. Amendments made to the Tajik constitution in 1999, for example, changed the presidential term of office to a single seven-year term (Atkin 2002: 106). President Rahmon then contested an election on this basis (despite already having served one term of five years) and was re-elected on the 6 November 1999 for a seven year term, with 97 per cent of the votes, in an election that was criticized by the OSCE, the European Union and the US Department of State for obstructionist candidate registration procedures, widespread multiple voting, and severe restrictions on political parties and the media (Human Rights Watch 2000, US Department of State 2000). Another constitutional referendum was held in June 2003 that set a new limit of two seven-year terms, potentially allowing President Rahmanov to stay in office until 2020 (i.e. another two terms after the current one ended in 2006). Due to the absence of measures for ensuring transparency in the vote-counting and tabulation processes, the OSCE did not monitor the referendum. Human Rights Watch, in reviewing the high voter turnout of 96 per cent and the 93 per cent approval rate, suggested that it was likely that the voting process was manipulated (Human Rights Watch 2004). The president then went on to win what was effectively his third term (although considered his first under the new constitution) by a considerable margin in late 2006 (IWPR Staff 2006). Like other Central Asian states, the executive is by far the most powerful branch of government in Tajikistan, with the other branches largely subservient to it (International Crisis Group 2003: 10). Political power is highly centralized and much of it is concentrated in the hands of the President and his supporters (Atkin 2002: 106, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe 2005: 3).

Nature of the Opposition

The government has also been quite successful in neutering opposition groups since the end of the war. Despite a peace agreement that included power-sharing arrangements that were initially, if slowly, implemented (Grant Smith 1999: 244–46), and a demobilization process that included integration of armed opposition groups into state structures (Torjesen and MacFarlane 2007: 316), opposition parties have remained weak and fragmented since hostilities ended. With Pamiri elements of the opposition confined to their mountainous region in the east, and largely mollified

by the preservation of the region's autonomy and large-scale support and services from non-state organizations (most notably the Aga Khan Foundation), the most militant group in the opposition UTO during the civil war was the IRP. It was the IRP that maintained operational bases with an estimated 5,000 fighters in northern Afghanistan until the end of the conflict and it was with the IRP leader, Said Abdullo Nuri, that Rahmon negotiated most directly in the final stages to bring the conflict to an end. Despite its relatively strong position within the opposition, however, IRP has lost the political initiative in the post war period, failing to mount a credible electoral threat to Rahmon in presidential elections while its electoral performance at the parliamentary level has also been weak. In the first post war parliamentary elections held in February 2000, for example, it won only two seats (compared to an absolute majority of 36 pro-presidential candidates elected) in a poll that was characterized by the OSCE as having significant irregularities (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe 2000). Since then the IRP has singularly failed to broaden its base beyond its own constituency and has been progressively marginalized from involvement in government affairs, despite the power sharing provisions of the 1997 peace agreement.

The second major source of opposition has come from the formerly dominant Leninabod region. Despite being a key part of the political coalition that placed Rahmon in power in late 1992, traditionally dominant northern clans were progressively excluded from power from 1994 onwards, symbolized by the forced departure of former prime minister and subsequent presidential candidate (against Rahmon) in the 1994 presidential elections, Abdumalik Abdullajanov, and his subsequent exclusion from peace negotiations that led to the end of the war (Akbarzadeh 2001). Subsequent attempts by northerners to organize politically have been strongly suppressed. Prominent northerners (including well-known northern academics) were killed by unidentified assailants during the 1990s, while the government has taken strong measures to limit the effectiveness of the northern-backed opposition Democratic Party.

Role of External Influences

As far as the colour revolutions go, consecutive sequencing of contentious political events and the apparent borrowing between them point to processes of international diffusion; indeed it is this diffusion of symbols and methods that constitutes the unifying theme signified by the colour motif. Larry Diamond (1999: 56–59) sets out five models of diffusion used by democratization theorists to describe the spread of (sometimes shallow) electoral democracy. These include the power model (where democratization is driven by powerful democratic states); a programmatic approach (where discrete bilateral and multilateral democracy assistance programmes diffuse the technology and institutional structures of democracy along with associated norms and values); imitation effects (where countries decide to emulate successful democracies themselves); normative change within countries that lead them to transitioning to democracy; and the 'world society' approach where democratization occurs because states are becoming increasingly

alike. In considering colour revolutions, then, what kinds of diffusion processes are going on? Colour revolutions follow previous patterns of contentious politics where social movements present similar combinations of campaign methods and repertoires (Tilly 2004: 3). Much of the diffusion of forms of contention that has occurred can be understood as arising because of both demonstration effects of successful episodes and deliberate programmatic efforts by knowledge brokers to transfer 'lessons learned' from one context to another. These processes represent a combination of programmatic effects and imitation with a heavy focus on elite learning (Beissinger 2007: 261). However, processes of programmatic diffusion, imitation and indeed sponsorship by external actors operate unevenly across the international tableau. In the case of the sequence of color revolutions described in this edited volume, it seems clear that the impact of such diffusion effects were limited: not all states where the colour motif was adopted were affected in the same way, and many states in the same region were hardly affected at all by this phenomenon. In addition, it would appear that effective responses by governments to such developments also diffused through the region – particularly with respect to alleged 'outside' involvement in such episodes (Beissinger 2007: 269–70).

As with many former Soviet states, Tajikistan has walked a line between engagement with Western states, particularly the US, and stabilizing and maintaining its relationship with Russia. Compared to other Central Asian states, however, Tajikistan has been relatively more dependent upon Russia, and as a consequence Russian actors – including, but not limited to the central Russian state – have played important roles in the political sphere since independence. Since early 1993 the Tajik government has also welcomed US government engagement in the humanitarian and development spheres, while remaining suspicious of any activities considered to have political objectives. The US Government democratization programme in Tajikistan, for example, has been limited to relatively uncontroversial topics, such as rule of law-type activities (e.g. training workshops for lawyers and judges). US-supported NGOs working on more 'political' activities, such as the National Democratic Institute (who support the development of a pluralistic political system through support for the political parties) have not been allowed to implement programme activities, despite having had a minimal representation in the country for some time. Tajik government suspicions of this organization were evident in 2005, with their failure to renew temporary work visas for several NDI employees (Walicki 2006: 82). Other US sponsored democracy and governance operations, while permitted, remained primarily focused on relatively narrow procedural and rule of law issues related to the mechanics of electoral systems, rather than the substance of democratic governance.[10]

Role of NGOs and Civil Society

The Tajik government has generally welcomed NGOs engaged in social service provision and/or humanitarian aid activities since late 1992.[11] However, in recent years the government has taken a firmer line in monitoring NGO and international organization activities in general, although in the view of one senior official

working with an inter-governmental organization in Dushanbe, it has refrained from taking as hard a line as neighboring Uzbekistan in these matters (a point also confirmed by Zartman (2004: 11)).[12] Because of its relative poverty and also the needs arising during and in the immediate aftermath of the civil war, Tajikistan (unlike Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan or Turkmenistan) has been quite heavily reliant on NGOs to provide a social safety net. Although this service-oriented presence has lessened in recent years (with a departure of key 'emergency' NGOs such as Médicins Sans Frontières and humanitarian donors such as the EU's humanitarian arm, ECHO), service-oriented NGOs and UN agencies played an important role in the return and reintegration of Tajik refugees in Afghanistan both before and after the end of the war (Hunt 1998). NGO interventions, including food distributions, in Tajikistan itself were vital, particularly in the Pamir region where the Aga Khan foundation took a leading role in providing support and care (Bliss 2005: 298–99, Kevlihan 2009: 36–45).[13]

Societal Attitudes Towards Political Change

The shadow of this civil war has cast a long pall over the contours of political support and mobilization in Tajikistan. A number of commentators have highlighted the perception that most Tajiks desire to maintain stability, preferring an autocratic system to the risks of a repeat of the civil war (Barnes and Abdullaev 2001; Jonson 2006: 148; Kimmage 2005; Rasmussen 2007: 6; Zartman 2004: 16). Many Tajiks, particularly those of Gharmi extraction, who may have had connections with the opposition during the war, remain reluctant to discuss the civil war – in part because of the trauma associated with that time, but also because the de facto victors of that conflict remain in power. Socially and politically, the maintenance of stability and order remains a priority, while the government remains sensitive to allegations that the country could contribute to instability in the region (for such predictions, see for example Oliker and Szayna 2003: 324).

The Elections of 2005

We come then to 2005, a year of relatively high risk for the government because of the parliamentary elections, and, as events transpired, contentious politics in the region, particularly those surrounding the elections in neighboring Kyrgyzstan. That absolutely no protest took place in Tajikistan over this time is a testimony to two major factors – effective measures taken by the government to pre-empt any such attempt, and the general reluctance of the local population to risk a return to war sparked by a new round of contentious street politics.

First to government measures: the government targeted potential threats in a number of ways. The first was to target senior opposition leaders, putting them into jail (either inside Tajikistan or, if they were exiled in Russia, putting them temporarily out of circulation there). These measures began before the election, with Democratic Party leader Mahmadruzi Iskandrov being imprisoned in December 2004 in Moscow, facing possible extradition on corruption charges to

Tajikistan (Mahmudov 2004). This also allowed the Tajik authorities to take his name off the ballot, candidates facing criminal charges being disqualified from seeking election (Abdullaev 2005). Government tactics in the run up to the 2005 parliamentary elections also specifically targeted IRP activity in the northern part of Tajikistan (an area outside its usual support base) and included the arrest and long-term imprisonment of senior IRP leaders, including the deputy leader of the National Party (Pannier 2004).

The government was also quite effective in dividing and splitting the opposition through recognition of particular factions of opposition parties (Spoerri 2008: 78) – most notably with respect to the Socialist Party (Vahobzade 2005). While several opposition parties came together in 2004 to form a coalition called The Coalition for Free and Fair Elections, it did not succeed in presenting the government with a coherent opposition in the run-up to the 2005 election, in part because the opposition alliance did not include the Communist Party, which was the second largest parliamentary party (after the pro-presidential party), and in part because of partially successful efforts by the government to disrupt the internal cohesion of this alliance, for example, by brokering a separate deal with opposition leader Iskandrov early in 2004 (Arman 2004).[14]

In the run-up to the 2005 elections, official attention specifically addressed the perceived risks of foreign-supported diffusion of mobilization methods. Although foreign-financed NGOs were not banned, election officials warned on 14 January that any candidate found to be receiving financial support from foreign organizations or individuals would be banned from taking part in the elections (Jonson 2006: 146). The government also cracked down on independent media, particularly Tajik-language media (Kasymbekova and Sharipova 2004), while the two most critical newspapers *Ruzi Nav* (New Day) and *Nerui Sukhan* (Power of Word) were repeatedly shut down for different, mainly 'administrative', reasons (Kimmage 2004), reducing further available mechanisms for any public mobilization, had one even been desired.[15]

However, the absence of colour revolution-style activities cannot simply be explained by government efforts to disrupt and destabilize the opposition – after all, such efforts have been made by other governments who nonetheless suffered from contentious episodes of this nature. In addition to government efforts – which clearly signaled a determination to resist any attempted public mobilizations, there was also an obvious lack of will on the part of the opposition to go down the road of public protest. In the wake of the 2005 Tajik election, for example, Tajik opposition leaders, while welcoming the events in Kyrgyzstan, also made it clear that they were not seeking broad-based action as in Kyrgyzstan. Instead opposition leaders made formal protests to the Tajik election commission – protests that were ignored (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2005c). The reluctance of opposition party leaders and the population in general to engage the government on issues of fairness in the election processes on the streets reflects a genuine lack of unwillingness to face the prospect of renewed civil war.

Measures Taken in the Aftermath of the Elections

The aftermath of the events in Kyrgyzstan provided further reason for alarm and concern in Dushanbe; in mid-May protests broke out in Andijon, in neighboring Uzbekistan that were forcefully put down by the Uzbek government. The Tajik government reaction to these events signaled a determination to respond to any similar challenge in a forceful manner; government officials publicly approved, for example, of Uzbekistan's actions, commenting that had the Tajik government used similar measures in 1992, such actions would have prevented the subsequent civil war (Jonson 2006: 147).

Government measures against opposition figures continued throughout 2005, reflecting ongoing concern, initially with the events in Kyrgyzstan, and subsequently with respect to possible aftershocks of the Andijon episode in neighboring Uzbekistan. In April 2005, opposition leader Iskandrov (mentioned above) was mysteriously abducted from Moscow after his release by the Russian authorities, only to subsequently reappear for trial in Tajikistan (Jonson 2006: 147; Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2005e; Zygar 2005), while Yaqoub Salimov, a former Minister of the Interior who subsequently opposed the government and was extradited from Russia in early 2004, was sentenced to 15 years in prison (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2005a, 2008a). The government also cracked down on banned political movements, notably the pan-Islamic organization known as Hizb Ut-Tahrir. Over 140 alleged members were reportedly imprisoned in 2005 (O'Dea 2006: 64–65), including a former Tajik counter-terrorism official sentenced to a 10-year prison term in April 2005 (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2005b).

In the wake of events in Kyrgyzstan in 2005, the Tajik administration also reinforced its relations with Russia: Russia had maintained a significant interest in Tajikistan throughout the civil war and into the post-conflict period, to such a significant degree that Tajikistan was described by one commentator in the mid 1990s as a 'Russian-Uzbek protectorate' (Rubin 1994). While Uzbek influence had waned rapidly with the marginalization of ethnic Uzbeks, northern Leninabodi elites and military commanders sympathetic to them in the 1990s, Russia maintained a significant interest in Tajikistan in 2005. The importance of these relations to the Tajik regime were highlighted by an unexpected trip by President Rahmon to meet President Putin in Sochi in early April 2005 (Jonson 2006: 147). This was followed by a speech by President Rahmon to Tajikistan's parliament on 16 April hailing improved relations with Russia, where he also expressed concern with respect to events in neighboring Kyrgyzstan and stressed that international organizations working in Tajikistan should abide to the strict implementation of tasks specified in their statutes with 'complete openness' and in conformity with domestic legislation (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2005f).

Domestically, this lurch towards Russia was also reflected in an increasingly shrill approach towards US government activities in the country. Indeed, throughout most of 2005 the US was placed on the diplomatic defensive with respect to its Tajikistan assistance programmes, being blamed for the events in neighbouring countries.[16] In April 2005, the US Embassy in Dushanbe issued a formal denial

of reports in Tajik newspapers (including two official publications), that the US Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan had plotted to overthrow the Kyrgyz government of Askar Akayev in 2005 with the assistance of US democracy NGOs. The document cited as evidence of these activities (which originated from Russian websites), was forged, the statement said (BBC Monitoring Service 2005). Again, in late 2005, a senior US government envoy publicly denied that US government's democratization activities were designed to spark a revolution, while requesting a public apology from a local newspaper for comments made against one of its rule of law programmes (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2005g).

NGOs also came under increased pressure in the wake of the Kyrgyz events – with the Tajik Ministry of Foreign Affairs distributing a letter on 13 April to NGOs and local and regional government offices within Tajikistan requiring these organizations to provide notification of all meetings, training and seminars. The letter required that representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs be present at all such events. In some areas security forces reportedly stopped NGO vehicles, warning them of this letter, while local security services in the Rasht Valley region of Tajikistan (an area of strong IRP support) imposed harsher measures on NGOs there, including a 5pm curfew, stating that they could not guarantee the security of NGO personnel after that time.[17] Reflecting pre-election patterns of harassment, local independent newpapers *Ruzi Nav* and *Nerui Sukhan* were also suspended in April 2005 for alleged legislative violations (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2005d).

The sequence of actions taken by the Tajik government, when compared to the events of the early 1990s, point to a number of important factors that served as chilling effects in 2005; the first is that the Rahmon government itself demonstrated considerably more capacity and will in its efforts to forestall any contentious episode than the Nabiev government did in 1991–2. It was relatively successful in utilizing the state apparatus, including the court system, to target opposition leaders and was effective in removing them from the political field at important moments. This contrasts to the destabilizing and factionalizing response of the Nabiev regime in creating and arming an opposing faction, because of its inability to control the coercive apparatus of the state to secure regime stability.

In addition to this actual capacity, the Rahmon government was also credible in its commitment to initiating a brutal response to any attempt to overthrow it: public statements made by senior officials supporting the Uzbek government response were credible because of the extreme measures taken by the present government in order to win the civil war. Actual experience of targeted assassinations and civil conflict initiated and seen through by the current regime in the context of a brutal war lent considerable credibility to threats of future violence. This highlights the importance of path dependence at the national level when considering the potential for contentious episodes to occur.

A second important component of path dependence relates to the attitudes of opposition leaders and their potential supporters – the memory of the civil war has left deep scars, and a genuine desire amongst many Tajiks for a quiet life. In relational terms, the combination of a credible commitment to the use of armed

force to put down any action by the government and low propensity to mobilize and risk this armed response generated self reinforcing processes that obviated the possibility of mass mobilization actually occurring in Tajikistan in 2005.

Conclusions

Tajikistan presents something of a two-sided coin with respect to its postwar experience in peace-building and democratization. On the one hand, the country has been something of a success with respect to the consolidation of peace (understood in a relatively narrow sense as the absence of widespread political violence) since 1997. Large scale, comparative research using quantitative methods indicates that the risks of new civil wars are higher in the immediate wake of previous civil conflict (Collier, Hoeffler and Sambanis 2005: 18). Tajikistan has beaten the odds in many respects: despite occasional violent incidents, the government has maintained and improved stability and central control since the end of the war. These developments are consistent with recent research on post conflict democratization that argues that a delay in democratization may be a stabilizing factor in the short to medium term in post conflict situations (Paris 2004: 5).

On the other hand, even in post conflict situations the rationale for delays in processes of democratization come down to a need to strengthen the institutional structures of the state (Paris 2006: 434), a process that arguably has been undermined in Tajikistan by the neo-patrimonialism of the current administration. Now, over ten years since the end of the war, Tajikistan remains one of the poorest countries in the region, with weak infrastructure, a struggling economy, a government that, despite early positive indicators through power-sharing provisions of the 1997 peace agreement, has failed to open up the political process to any meaningful competition and seems set on actively preventing any future attempts at regime change through public contentious politics. Indeed, if anything, the government has become increasingly intolerant of opposition as the years since the 1997 peace agreement have gone by.

This may in part be related to its failures in governing Tajikistan effectively. Increasingly the Rahmon government seems to be incapable of addressing even basic needs – as the experience of the winter of early 2008 illustrated, when electricity supplies had to be cut off for extended periods to urban areas, including Dushanbe, because of a lack of government resources. That even citizens of the capital city suffer these, and indeed other daily hardships,[18] is an indication of government failures. Such indicators of government incapacity, together with the declining economic situation in the region, which is reducing economic opportunities for migrant Tajik labor, have given rise to publicly expressed fears that Tajikistan will once again revert to a failed state (Falkowski and Jarosiewicz 2009: 1; Stern 2008: 5).

As time passes, it also seems that past reluctance to demonstrate against government policies may be fading – as a recent demonstration in Khorog in June 2008 in protest at rising food prices indicates (Aioubov 2008). A similar reluctance to risk renewed civil conflict was prevalent in Georgia in the years between

its independence and the colour revolution there. These concerns were publicly played on by the incumbent government of the time but were ultimately swept aside (Ó Beacháin and Polese 2008: 99). That said, the scale of the Tajik conflict – second only in terms of casualties to the war in Chechnya in the former Soviet zone, places a heavier burden of history on would-be Tajik colour revolutionaries than in other states, even states that had earlier suffered conflict as a result of contentious politics, such as Georgia.

The Tajik government also remains vigilant and retains the capacity to respond to perceived threats, at least for the time being. As recently as April 2008, for example, a small local demonstration against the demolition of houses in an area undergoing urban reconstruction resulted in 20 protestors being arrested (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2008b). Meanwhile, the Tajik government continues to focus its attention on perceived political threats. The NDI, for example, was denied government registration and as a consequence in May 2008 announced their decision to close their office in Tajikistan (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2008c).

What then can be drawn from the Tajikistan case? The events of 2005, when the risks of some kind of new contentious episode were greatest, highlight the path-dependent nature of political development in individual states, even those sharing significant commonalities because of the Soviet legacy. The civil war in Tajikistan represented a critical juncture in the development of the state compared to other Central Asia states. The legacy of this war has meant that mobilizing opportunities for political change – what Charli Carpenter (2005: 311) refers to as the strategic environment, or what Beissinger (2007: 266) calls structural conditions – necessary to sustain a colour revolution have not been not present in Tajikistan, at least to date. The fact that shared memories of the civil war are undoubtedly receding with an increasingly youthful population, and indeed that the government itself has declared the postwar reconstruction period to be at an end (Marat 2008) may change future dynamics with respect to public contention. However the experiences of the pre-war period and the war itself have shaped public politics in Tajikistan for the last ten or more years. In the end, the case of Tajikistan demonstrates that while the existence of transnational networks for the diffusion of the colour revolution phenomenon certainly constitute a contributory factor in colour revolutions, domestic conditions and historical experience also matter.

Notes

1 The author wishes to thank the editors for comments on earlier drafts of this chapter; a slightly different presentation related to this same area of research was presented at a Bang School of Business research seminar at KIMEP, Almaty, Kazakhstan in February 2009. The author would also like to all who attended and commented on the research presented there, some of which influenced this paper, particularly Ustina Markus, Nargis Kassenova, Jiri Melich and Fatemeh Ghotb.

2 As Beissinger (2007: 264) helpfully highlights, the 2005 election was one of three electoral events in Tajikistan between 2000 and 2006 (the other two being the February 2000 legislative elections and the November 2006 Presidential elections) that might

have sparked a color revolution type event. However, the working assumption of this paper is that 2005 was the most likely moment, because the impact of diffusion processes associated with color revolutions can be observed in the region most clearly at this time.

3 Ironically the victim of this dispute, Navjonov, reportedly did not wish for the demonstration to go ahead or continue because of the risks involved (per interview with former senior Ministry of Interior official, Dushanbe, February 2008).
4 Interview, Shartuz, southern Tajikistan, May 2008.
5 Interviews Varskh and Kurgan Teppa, May 2008.
6 Per interviews conducted with people present in Dushanbe at this time. Interviews were conducted in both Dushanbe and Kurgan Teppa, May 2008.
7 Per interview, Dushanbe, October 2007.
8 Sangak Safarov, representative of Kulyob clan. A famous warlord, ex-convict sentenced for 20 years of imprisonment during the Soviets and released to head the armed forces of the Popular from on the behalf of the Neo-Communists, against the coalition of oppositionist political parties that later has transformed into United Tajik Opposition. Safarov was assassinated under mysterious circumstances during the civil war.
9 The nomenclature of 'government' and 'opposition' becomes somewhat difficult around this time with the inclusion of opposition elements within the government during that summer. However, following local discourse on these events and the war itself, I have elected to use the term 'opposition' throughout to describe the various demonstrators and their supporters in Shahidon square, who went on during the war to by represented by under the manner of the United Tajik Opposition.
10 Per discussions Dushanbe, October 2007, and Almaty, April 2008.
11 Per interview with former senior government official, Dushanbe, May 2008.
12 Per interview, Dushanbe, October 2007.
13 Per interviews conducted in Dushanbe, October 2007.
14 Which he subsequently backed out of, leading to government targeting of him and his departure for Moscow in 2004, and divisions within the Socialist Party mentioned above.
15 This section draws from an as yet unpublished manuscript entitled 'Tajikistan' co-written by Rob Kevlihan and Rukhshona Najimiddinova for a proposed edited book / encyclopedia on political systems in Muslim majority states.
16 Per comments made at a public seminar at the Kazakhstan Institute of Management, Economics and Strategic Research (KIMEP), in Almaty, Kazakhstan, on the 4th February 2009 by Ambassador Hoagland, former US ambassador to Tajikistan in 2005 and then current US ambassador to Kazakhstan.
17 Per review of translations by the author of Tajik government notices on this issue and NGO related correspondence.
18 During a visit in May 2008 by the author for example, the lack of running water in part of the city was another obvious government failure – at sunset people living in high story buildings close to Dushanbe's river could be seen filling up plastic buckets from the river to address their water needs.

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12 Kazakhstan

Rico Isaacs

Introduction

Is president of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev's authority under threat as a result of the popular uprisings that occurred between 2003 and 2005 in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan? Will the colour revolutions inspire Kazakh opposition elites to mobilize popular discontent to overthrow Nazarbayev? Or conversely will the disproportionate actions of the authorities in Kazakhstan only breed more discontent?

Henry Hale suggested the recent revolutions are a result of 'lame duck syndrome' (Hale 2005). According to this hypothesis, the legitimacy of a post-Soviet president is undermined by their commitment to not seek another term in office, consequently the elite consolidation surrounding the president fragments and opposition elites emerge. The opposition then utilizes the potential of civil society to overthrow the existing regime, marginalizing the chosen successor of the incumbent president. A tipping point is usually a fraudulent and corrupt electoral process that mobilizes popular support for opposition elites. In Kazakhstan, Nazarbayev has avoided this scenario by ensuring that despite elite fragmentation there is limited political space for the political opposition to compete effectively and marshal the population to protest against the regime. Through a series of sanctions and laws he has minimized any burgeoning civil society, freedom of assembly, independent media and the opportunity for opposition parties to compete fairly in elections. This is underpinned by a psychology of legitimacy where Nazarbayev's centrality to stability, in the present and future, is valued above political reform. Nazarbayev's presidency has presided over a significant period of economic growth brought about by high oil prices. The perception is that he has delivered material benefits and economic growth, as well as inter-ethnic stability to the populace. Evidently agency alone is not responsible for the success or failure of a revolution, as structural factors are important too. The opposition in Kazakhstan, therefore, has been restricted by a limited space within which to operate and the enduring popularity of Nazarbayev due to his perceived success in delivering material benefits and economic stability.

Based on Gene Sharp's theory of power and his multi-faceted understanding of what sustains the legitimacy of a ruler and the obedience of a population, this chapter will explore the laws, sanctions, context and executive opportunities that

have limited the political space in Kazakhstan within which civil society, freedom of assembly, mass media and political parties can develop freely. In Kazakhstan, sanctions have minimized the opposition's efforts at reproducing a Kazakh version of the Orange, Rose or Tulip revolutions. Simultaneously, opposition elites' incapacity to engage and mobilize society is conditioned by a psychological reverence for Nazarbayev that is driven primarily by the material benefits brought about by economic growth and inter-ethnic stability.[1] The grand narrative constructed by Nazarbayev carefully positions Kazakhstan as an alternative model of political and economic development to Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. The model of a step-by-step evolution to democracy has proved persuasive and popular with the population and contributed greatly to Nazarbayev's popularity and legitimacy.

It is possible to observe throughout the analysis presented in this chapter five key attributes that are either absent or insufficiently occurring in the political process, which can assist in explaining why Kazakhstan is less susceptible to a colour revolution. First, elites are generally consolidated around the president. Those oppositional elites who do exist are cut from the same cloth as the ruling elite and are unwilling to agitate public uprisings against Nazarbayev. Second, the opposition is generally weak. While some parties are well financed they have little public support, are marginalized from political processes (due to sanctions) and lack sufficient will to challenge the regime. Third, external agents are more interested in their hard security and economic interests (terrorism and energy) than liberal democratic normative socialization. Pressure for reform from the international community, while present, remains weak and poorly enforced. Fourth, civil society is weak and ground down by repressive sanctions and as well as being co-opted by the government. Lastly, a large degree of the population is seemingly passive and uninterested in politics. Many possess a psychological reverence to Nazarbayev based on the perceived material benefits he has brought the nation.

This chapter, therefore, presents three conclusions with regards to the phenomena of colour revolution and the case of Kazakhstan: (1) Nazarbayev's regime is less susceptible to revolution due to the careful and skilful management of the political space through laws and sanctions limiting the opposition's ability to operate and rally popular support; (2) these sanctions and laws are maintained and accepted by the population due to the material benefits Nazarbayev's leadership has provided and this is manifested in a psychological reverence towards Nazarbayev contributing to the sustainability of his popularity and legitimacy; (3) a colour revolution, therefore, is only possible if material and psychological benefits disintegrate. What follows is a more detailed analysis of the above argument.

The chapter is broken down into two main sections. The first explores those laws and sanctions pertaining to NGOs, public meetings, mass media, political parties and elections. It will reveal how each law has minimized the prospects for civil society to emerge and develop and for the opposition to have a platform from which to publicly oppose the regime and acquire popular support. The second section demonstrates that those laws have only been successful due to the material and psychological benefits Nazarbayev is perceived to have provided the country, thus creating a reverence and legitimacy for his leadership that impacts on the

opposition elite's efforts at promoting public support for their cause. Economic growth and ethnic stability has provided a grand narrative in which Nazarbayev is able to showcase his legitimacy and centrality to Kazakhstan, a narrative that for the meantime resonates with much of the population.

Sanctions

According to Gene Sharp, sanctions are connected to the law of the state and arise when a ruler, using the resources of the state, requires that an obligation be met (Sharp, 1973). They are coercive by nature, with compliance acquired through fear of punishment. While Sharp suggests the fear of and compliance to sanctions is driven by physical violence, they can have a much broader purpose. Sanctions are in essence those series of laws enacted by authoritarian regimes that limit space and opportunity for dissent to their rule. This can be achieved through laws of the public and civic domain (laws regarding the development of civil society, public meetings and the mass media) and the institutions that are designed to facilitate representation of the masses (elections and parties). The fear of reprisal for non-compliance to these laws enables the authorities to keep organized dissent to a minimum and reduce the opportunities for planned and coordinated insurrection.

Laws Relating to the Development of Civil Society

For a revolution to occur there needs to be a reasonably active civil society where the public are able to organize independently from the state. Non-state organizations and youth movements underpinned the organized campaign by opposition elites in Georgia and Ukraine. Wary of a similar scenario, the ruling regime in Kazakhstan has moved to co-opt and coerce non-state organizations by forging closer links with them, which has consequently undermined their autonomy.

In the first few years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan witnessed the active development of NGOs and public associations free from state interference (Zhovtis 1999). Constitutionally the state and civil society remained separate, as state financing of public associations was prohibited. However, the terms were ambiguous and through a series of laws the government has largely set in motion the co-option of NGOs by the state.[2] The 2005 law regarding state contracts established a legal framework for the state to fund NGOs through the distribution of contracts related to the provision of public services. It was effectively a form of state procurement (Ovcharenko 2006). The timing of the law's introduction suggests the presidential administration was concerned about the prospect of NGO-led civil unrest similar to that which that had occurred in Georgia and Ukraine. NGOs had played a crucial role in those uprisings and closer financial links between the state and NGOs in Kazakhstan began the process of reigning in NGOs, especially those funded by foreign donors.

In the wake of events in Georgia and Ukraine a key aim of the Nazarbayev regime was to reduce the influence of foreign-financed NGOs. It is widely perceived among the governing elite that foreign-funded NGOs were one of the

key drivers behind the colour revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. Initially, following the uprisings, the government sought to employ a new draft law placing additional restrictions on the actions of NGOs, which was to give the government more power in sanctioning those groups funded by foreign donors of whom they disapproved. In a rare success, a campaign by the Confederation of Non-governmental Organizations of Kazakhstan managed to convince the Constitutional Court to turn down the proposed restrictive bill.[3] Nevertheless, the government and Nazarbayev closely watch NGOs financed by foreign donors and are cautious of their unsettling influence (Dave 2007). In 2004, after the events in Ukraine, the Soros Foundation in Kazakhstan had their offices raided by the police and a criminal investigation of alleged tax evasion launched against them.[4] The Soros Foundation claimed the raid, which came just two days after the victory of Yushchenko in Ukraine, was politically motivated and was in response to their work and involvement in relation to the events in Ukraine at the time (Saidazimova 2004).

While the government may have been unsuccessful in completely curbing foreign influence on NGO development they have been able to co-opt many NGO groups. When Nazarbayev instigated the State Commission for Democratic Reforms to explore the possibility of 'further democratisation' in Kazakhstan he urged political parties and NGOs to be involved.[5] Those who did not participate found themselves marginalized and delegitimized by the regime. With only 10 per cent of NGOs in Kazakhstan engaged in issues relating to civil liberties and human rights it suggests the government has been successful in minimizing the development of a truly active and independent civil society.

Laws Relating to the Freedom of Assembly

The ability of citizens to freely assemble in public without fear of sanctions for doing so, or at least being prepared despite the risks, is key to the success of a revolutionary movement. Indeed mass assembly has been central to all colour revolutions. There are strict limitations on the freedom of assembly in Kazakhstan as the authorities heavily manage any form of public meeting. Requests for planned public meetings need to be submitted to the Akimat (local governors' office) at least 10 days prior to the event. Anyone seeking to organize a public meeting in protest of government policy requires the authorization of the local Akim (governor). The government justifies the law on the basis that they are promoting stability, as it allows them formal scope to prevent public gatherings that potentially might incite inter-ethnic strife. This has made it increasingly difficult for the opposition to organize public rallies as the Akimat can turn down requests from those groups who potentially challenge the authority of the president. On most occasions opposition parties like Azat (Freedom),[6] the All-National Social Democratic Party (ANSDP), and Alga (Forward) have either had their request for public meetings rejected or are only permitted to hold them in remote venues outside of the main hub of the city, making it difficult to attract support and media attention.

At the same time the state has the power to enforce tough sanctions on those

willing to break the law and hold unsanctioned public meetings. Law enforcement bodies are quick to meet any unlicenced meeting with a heavy disproportionate reaction. An example was a series of protests in Almaty during May and June 2007. The protests, which did not have the permission of the local Akimat, were in response to changes to the constitution heralded by Nazarbayev as a further step towards greater democratization. In the view of the opposition, and some analysts, the alterations to the constitution in effect consolidated and legitimized Nazarbayev's complete control of the political system (Isaacs 2008). The protests began when independent journalist Sergey Duvanov led a one-man demonstration in the main square in Almaty against the reforms he viewed as political deceit. Most people present were either journalists or plain clothes KNB officers (the KNB is Kazakhstan's successor organization to the KGB); few members of the public were in attendance. Duvanov was met with a large police presence and was eventually aggressively hauled into a police van and to jail (Toguzbayev 2007a). A number of further protests took place regarding this issue and all were met with similarly tough sanctions (Toguzbayev 2007b; Toguzbayev and Frenkel 2007). These incidents illustrate how Nazarbayev's regime has carefully managed potential mass public dissent making it difficult for any group to organize and coordinate large-scale public meetings at short notice without being met by aggressive sanctions.

Laws Relating to Freedom of Expression

In Sharp's work on methods of non-violent action, communication with a wider audience is central to the success of a revolutionary movement (Sharp 1973). Extensive and broad communication requires fair access to mass media resources. With regard to this issue there are three problems facing the opposition in Kazakhstan: the restrictive nature of the Law on Mass Media, the close relationship between the state and the media and limited opportunities for the opposition to access media resources (Article 19 2006).

The Law on Mass Media is considered 'so restrictive that it seriously stifles free expression' (Article 19 2006). The law includes strict limitations on registration of media outlets and thematic content and is used to repress independent-minded journalists and opposition parties. State control over registration of new media outlets gives the regime significant scope to refuse registration of organizations that they do not approve.[7] It has led to a situation where the media lacks independence and any media outlets perceived to be disloyal are marginalized or brought to public trial to face sanctions.[8] The fear of sanctions leads many Kazakh journalists down a path of self-censorship. As Sergey Duvanov has pointed out, 'most journalists are using the following principal in their work, everything is permitted except those points that are forbidden' (International Eurasian Institute for Economic and Political Research 2002). With the exception of a few journalists who work in a 'zone of heightened risk' and a few opposition papers such as *Respublika* (Republic), *Vremya* (Time) and *Svoboda Slova* (Free Speech), the overall balance of the media in Kazakhstan is pro-regime and pro-Nazarbayev. Dissenting voices are given no platform. The internet has also come under close scrutiny in recent

years too, with several opposition websites being shut down, including the popular kub.kz, geo.kz and inkar.info (Duvanov 2007).

The heavy restriction on thematic content is reflected in the close relationship between the state and the media despite 80 per cent of the media being privately owned. The state plays a large role in overseeing and monitoring the Law of Mass Media; and as a consequence the law is privy to political slanting (Article 19 2006). Most major media outlets are either partially state-owned or in the hands of interests who are close to the president. In recent years Nazarbayev has sought to further centralize and bring back under the umbrella of the state many privately owned media outlets. Most notably, the large media portfolio previously managed by his daughter Dariga Nazarbayeva and her husband Rakhat Aliev came back under state control between 2006 and 2007. This included the television stations Khabar, Eurasia TV and KTK, and the newspapers *Karavan*, *Novoe Pokelennie* and *Gazeta KZ*. By bringing back under his influence major and popular media outlets, Nazarbayev has ensured the official line of the regime is maintained and ubiquitous.[9]

The restrictive media law and the large state presence in the media market results in limited access to major media outlets for the opposition. When they are given coverage it is more likely than not a negative portrayal of their actions. Gaining further access to the media is one of the fundamental issues for opposition political parties. Such is the emphasis they place on media access that many consider it more important than developing their own party bases. Opposition parties like Azat, Alga and ANSDP believe mass communication through owning a satellite television station would enable them to have a far greater reach than working directly with the population in the regions.[10] This has been achieved in the last two years by the establishment of an on-line opposition TV channel K-Plus, illustrating how the opposition is using the Internet to circumvent the media restrictions placed on them. Realizing that as long as Nazarbayev has a tight grip on the media, suppressing any form of alternative view, they have little chance of not only getting their message across, but also resonating with the public and building support and legitimacy. The regime's stranglehold on the media narrows the public space in which the opposition movement can appeal to wider society. One of the building blocks of colour revolutions was a more even distribution of political forces having access to the means of mass communication. In Kazakhstan that access is absent.

Laws Relating to Political Parties

Not only are there restrictions regarding the possibilities for the opposition to access the media, there are also considerable barriers placed in front of them in relation to their ability to organize politically in the form of political parties. The Law on Political Parties was designed to manage the plethora of opposition parties that emerged from the process of elite fragmentation.[11] Elite fragmentation was a process that involved a number of high-level government officials and ministers, along with prominent businessmen, exiting the patronage and safety of the Nazarbayev regime and going into open opposition. Its peak occurred in 2001

when a large group of major figures concerned with increasing authoritarianism and the emerging influence of Rakhat Aliev, Nazarbayev's son-in-law, formed the political movement Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (DCK).[12] The movement, however, was prone to schisms and divisions and did not last long as a unified body and several political parties materialized from it. Ak Zhol (Bright Path), led by Bolat Abilov, Alikhan Baimenov and Oraz Zhandosov emerged from DCK and wished to pursue a softer line vis-à-vis the authorities and Nazarbayev. Ak Zhol also split in 2005 with Abilov and Zhandosov alongside Tulegen Zhukeev and Altynbek Sarsenbayev establishing Nagyz Ak Zhol (True Bright Path) and Baimenov remaining with Ak Zhol. These elite figures were divided over the extent to which they should pursue a closer dialogue with the authorities and the president after the fraudulent parliamentary election of 2004. In 2008, after another unsuccessful election campaign in the parliamentary election of 2007, this time as a united party with Zharmakhan Tuyakbai's ANSDP, Nagiz Ak Zhol reconstituted itself as Azat, with Bolat Abilov the sole leader of the party. In October 2009 the two parties decided again to merge, announcing their integration into the Azat National-Social Democratic Party.

After the emergence of Ak Zhol, the remaining members of DCK established DCK as a political party. They contested the 2004 parliamentary election in an electoral bloc with the Communist Party, but only managed to obtain 3.4 per cent of the vote. Their campaign was also hindered by media bias, censorship and intimidation by the authorities. DCK was liquidated in December 2004 by a court in Almaty on the grounds of fuelling national and social tension, which is prohibited by the constitution (Mamytov 2004). The liquidation of DCK, while coming as no surprise because of the presidential administrations historical dislike of the party, did coincide with the immediate aftermath of the Orange Revolution. The party had expressed solidarity with the Orange movement in Ukraine and the authorities were likely insuring themselves against DCK trying to attempt anything similar in Kazakhstan. Following their liquidation the party reconstituted as Alga, but has been unable despite two attempts to obtain party registration with the Ministry of Justice. The Law on Political Parties put in place the legal mechanism for keeping parties the authorities viewed as threatening outside the political process.

According to pro-presidential figures, the Law on Political Parties was introduced to institutionalize the role of parties in the political system and 'establish the rules of the game for political parties and their legal basis'.[13] Nonetheless, the law is a case study in interdiction, as it is operationalized as a mechanism by the authorities to marginalize opposition parties. The major restrictions within the law are connected to the registration process. In the first instance, parties are required to collect 40,000 members' signatures within two months of their party's founding. Of these 40,000 signatures the party are required to have a minimum of 600 members in each Oblast (region).[14] All signatures are checked for their validity before the Ministry of Justice will register the party. At a party's constituent congress there is a requirement to have at least 1,000 people in attendance from all Oblasts. Locating venues to accommodate 1,000 people is not easy and of those venues that are suitable, parties require the permission of the local Akim

(governor), giving the authorities an element of control over the process. 40,000 signatures is a very large figure, suggesting only well-financed opposition parties can afford the huge logistical nationwide operation of collecting the signatures. The re-registration process held after the introduction of the 2002 law eradicated many of the smaller, less financially endowed opposition parties (Mazhilis Press Service 2003).[15]

The law has not been a complete barrier to the registration of opposition parties as currently two are officially registered, Azat-National Social-Democratic Party and the Communist Party. Nevertheless, parties that have been permitted official registration were either formerly close to the regime (i.e. those elites that emerged from the elite fragmentation process) or clearly fulfilled all the requirements of the law that to refuse their registration would make it obvious that they were being denied registration on political grounds. It is illustrative of the president's tactic of permitting 'acceptable' opposition parties to operate so as to present an image to the international community of an active and pluralist party system. The law, however, is used to deny registration to parties the regime would rather not see participating in the political system. Alga is currently on its second registration attempt. Previous efforts have been declined on the basis of just 0.7 per cent falsified signatures from the 63,000 they had submitted.[16] With their most recent attempt, the Ministry of Justice suspended its decision on whether to register Alga in January 2007; at the time of writing the party is still waiting a final decision. Atameken's (Land of our Forefathers) registration was also suspended in 2007 and is still waiting a firm answer.[17]

The law regarding political parties has been an effective instrument for Nazarbayev to eliminate from the electoral process overtly critical political parties, which has denied them a crucial public platform. Simultaneously, those former elites who were close to his regime have seen their parties legally recognized and able to participate in electoral competition. Parties such as Azat, ANSDP and Ak Zhol are understood to be less prone to appealing to the public to protest on the streets, thus preventing a scenario whereby there is a broad opposition movement appealing to the public to act outside the boundaries of the law.

The Electoral System, Administration and Process

The electoral system in Kazakhstan is designed to favour the president's party, Nur Otan (Light of Fatherland), and marginalize opposition parties. Formal electoral rules are implemented to increase the chances of a Nur Otan victory. For example, the 7 per cent threshold for entry into parliament and the move to a fully proportional electoral system were introduced to assist Nur Otan in gaining as many seats in the Mazhilis (parliament) at the expense of other political parties. Prior to the 2007 constitutional changes the election system in Kazakhstan was a mixed member majoritarian (MMM) system and of the 77 seats in the Mazhilis, 67 were based on single mandate constituencies and ten on proportional representation on the basis of party lists. In the 2004 parliamentary election, the first post-Soviet election after the Rose Revolution in Georgia, the political opposition were able to

Table 11.1 Results of the 2007 Election to the Mazhilis

Party	*Total Votes*	*Party Vote %*	*No. Seats*
Nur Otan	5247720	88.41	98
All National Social Democratic Party (ANSDP)	269310	4.54	0
Ak Zhol	183346	3.09	0
Social and Democratic Party 'Auyl'	89855	1.51	0
Communist Peoples Party of Kazakhstan (KPPK)	76799	1.29	0
Party of Patriots	46436	0.78	0
Rukhaniyat	22159	0.37	0
Candidates Nominated by the Peoples Assembly of Kazakhstan (APK)	–	–	9

(Source Adapted from Kazakhstan Central Election Commission website: http://election.kz/portal/page?_pageid=153,605690&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL)

get only one deputy elected to parliament via the party list vote. The main opposition party, Ak Zhol, claimed that they had received at least double the number of votes proportioned to them. The majority of seats went to pro-presidential parties, most notably Otan (Fatherland).[18] Observers of the 2004 election believed them to fall short of international norms and the opposition declared the result fraudulent (OSCE/ODIHR 2004). As part of the 2007 constitutional changes the electoral system was altered to one nationwide constituency with all deputies being elected via a party list. The number of assembly members also increased to 107. Despite Nazarbayev declaring the changes an important step on the road to Kazakhstan's greater democratization, Nur Otan won the election with 88 per cent of the vote filling all seats in the Mazhilis, as no other party managed to surmount the 7 per cent barrier (see Table 1). Indeed, while formally the electoral law and administrative process is democratic in theory, it is rather the interpretation of the law and process that inhibits and limits the chances of opposition parties.

A major concern for the opposition in the administration of the election is that the election commissions, important bodies that administer and monitor the electoral process, are stacked highly in favour of pro-presidential parties. The election commissions lack a sufficient pluralistic balance to supervise the process in a fair and transparent way (OSCE/ODIHR 2004). Under the current system political parties are allowed to nominate one candidate for each of the 9727 Precinct Election Commissions (PECs).[19] In the 2007 campaign ANSDP, the only opposition party participating, were allocated only 3.6 per cent of places in the PECs.[20] *Nur Otan* on the other hand were allocated 14.3 per cent, although it should be noted many commission members elected from public associations were also *Nur Otan* members. Without a fair and balanced representation on the PECs to monitor

vote counting the process becomes susceptible to violations. Indeed it has become such a problem that during the 2007 parliamentary election the OSCE concluded that 40 per cent of the vote counting procedure was subject to electoral violations (OSCE/ODIHR 2007:22–24).

As highlighted earlier, the opposition continues to be stifled by limited access and unfair representation in the media. The problems existing in the current law regarding mass media are intensified in an election scenario. The 2004 and 2007 parliamentary elections and the 2005 presidential contest consistently saw a greater spread of media bias towards Nazarbayev and Nur Otan at the expense of opposition parties (Centre for Social Technologies 2007).[21] Nur Otan also possesses exhaustive access to state administrative resources including finances, buildings and human resources. The opposition cannot compete with the assets Nur Otan has at its disposal. Simultaneously, the sanctions imposed regarding freedom of assembly are strengthened during this period, giving the local Akims the right to reject any proposed public protest. Indeed, during pre-election periods the authorities exhibit a tendency to prepare for any public displays of dissent by calling in extra police and military enforcements into the major cities. These aspects of the electoral process – election commissions, vote counting, access to the media, pro-regime dominance of state administrative resources and the limitations on public protest, demonstrate how the authorities have narrowed the boundaries of opposition participation by minimizing the risk entailed by allowing them to participate in the election in the first instance.

The Elections of 2004, 2005 and 2007: The Non-tipping Points

Central to all colour revolutions has been a disputed or fraudulent election. As mentioned above, Kazakhstan has not been unusual in this sense. No single election in Kazakhstan's post-Soviet history has been declared free and fair by international standards. So why, when there has been evidence of a fraudulent process, has the opposition been unable to stage and manage significant public protest? The examples of the 2004, 2005 and 2007 elections highlight not just the sanctions and laws introduced by the regime to limit the space within which the opposition has been able to operate but also the internal problems within the opposition itself.

Of all the recent elections, the 2004 parliamentary election provided the best opportunity for the opposition to solicit mass public demonstrations in response to the fraudulent results. Ak Zhol, the main opposition party contesting this election, had emerged as a more moderate party from DCK in 2002. The leaders of the party, Bolat Abilov, Alikhan Baimenov and Oraz Zhandosov, rather than risk being sent to prison as other leaders of DCK had, preferred to pursue a softer, more collegial, approach to the regime.[22] According to senior members of the party, Ak Zhol's real vote in the 2004 election was around 40 per cent.[23] Yet, in the official figures published by the Central Election Commission, they received just 12 per cent. Believing the results to have been falsified, the party had an opportunity to seize the moment and organize protests by taking to the streets. The party did not

and instead the party leadership became embroiled in a very public internal dispute with Baimenov who was unwilling to publicly denounce the results and go against Nazarbayev, while the other co-chairman wanted to take a tough stance against the results and the president. Abilov and Zhandosov split from Baimenov and with Tulegen Zhukeev and Altynbek Sarsenbayev created their own party, Nagyz Ak Zhol. The opposition's biggest problem was that they were struggling for influence with the president rather than struggling for the electorate.

The themes of internal division and a lack of willingness to connect with the wider population have been ongoing for the opposition. In preparation for the 2005 presidential election, the opposition attempted to emulate some of the characteristics of the Yushchenko 'Our Ukraine' Movement from the Orange Revolution in Ukraine. Nagyz Ak Zhol, Alga, the Communist Party and the Republican People's Party of Kazakhstan (RNPK) all united as the For a Just Kazakhstan (FJK) bloc and put forward a single candidate Zharmakhan Tuyakbai who had recently defected to the opposition from Otan. Similar to the Ukrainian opposition, they chose a unified colour (yellow) and some of the leaders flew out to Ukraine to speak with Yushchenko and have their picture taken. As with Our Ukraine, For a Just Kazakhstan made corruption one of the main tenets of their election platform. Organizationally, the similarities end here. Unlike in Ukraine, the opposition made no real preparation for a protest on the streets. According to a senior party worker for FJK, 'the main point was that people might go on the streets but the opposition did not do anything to stage or support protests. There were several actions aimed at raising tension, a rally in support of Galymzhan Zhakiyanov (one of the original leaders of DCK) who was in prison and a few-in-number youth rallies but these were sporadic and did not have any consistent plan.'[24] Therefore, the few rallies that did take place had little organizational support from the opposition and aroused minimal public interest. Essentially, other than structural unification the opposition had no concrete plan of what to do in the likely event of falsification of the vote. Alongside this, the natural schisms that appear in any unified political movement were achingly obvious. On one side of the room sat the leader of the Communist Party, Serikbolsyn Abdil'din, and on the other, Oraz Zhandosov, the Western market-oriented leader of Nagyz Ak Zhol. For those who were responsible for writing the opposition's platform they found 'bringing these people together and writing one document difficult, as they represented vastly different things'.[25] Naturally, soon after the election the conglomeration of parties went their separate ways.

Emphasis should not just be placed on the opposition's organizational complacency and failure to appeal to a wider section of society. As has been described above, Nazarbayev had put in place a series of sanctions and laws that nullified and anticipated any agitation from the opposition. This strategy, referred to as the 'colourless revolution', was intensified prior to the 2005 election, as the authorities were keen to anticipate any form of public unrest similar to what occurred in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan (Alibekov 2005; Kennedy 2006: 46). There was a tightening of restrictions on the opposition holding public rallies and there were several cases of intimidation and harassment of the opposition's campaign staff.

The opposition newspaper *Svoboda Slova* was confiscated periodically and halted from reaching the vendors, while extra police and equipment were called into the major cities prior to the election so as to intimidate the opposition into erring on the side of caution with regards to street protests (OSCE/ODIHR 2005:8–11). As with 2004, there was no widespread public interest or support for a popular uprising.

When pre-term 2007 parliamentary elections were held the opposition again tried to use the tactics of structural unification. On this occasion, the ANDSP merged with Nagyz Ak Zhol and the leadership once again appealed to the Communist Party and the unregistered Alga to join them as a united front against the regime. The Communist Party declined, the leadership shrewdly recognizing that participating in the elections would only serve to legitimize potentially fraudulent results (KPK Press Service 2007). The Alga party leadership split over the issue, resulting in the chairman, Assylbek Kozhakhmetov, resigning. Consequently, the presidium of the party's political council voted against merging with ANSDP and Nagyz Ak Zhol, forfeiting any chance of participating in an election (Alga DVK Press Service, 2007). As with the previous elections, the result for pro-presidential forces was emphatic; according to official figures released by the Central Election Commission, the opposition won just 4.5 per cent of the vote and no representation in the Mazhilis. Their campaign was lacklustre and held back by censorship and media bias (ANSDP 2007a). With reasonable grounds to believe the results were fraudulent and arguing that the outcome signified 'the country's roll back to the Soviet past,' the party leadership chose to challenge the results through the courts as opposed to organized action on the streets (ANSDP 2007b). This is despite knowing that the courts are effectively under Nazarbayev's rule and unlikely to overturn any election result.

The puzzle that arises is why the opposition has such difficulty in engaging and connecting with the wider public? The answer lies with Nazarbayev's relationship with the population in Kazakhstan and how his message and grand narrative of economics before politics and stability before the unpredictability of democracy is mostly accepted and viewed as legitimate. The psychological reverence for Nazarbayev is underpinned by the economic growth he has brought to the country. The material benefits his supervision of the economy has given the population has meant that the public are not sufficiently discontented to consider removing him through both legal and non-constitutional means.

Material Benefits

The role of agency alone is not an adequate explanation for a colour revolution. While those sanctions introduced by Nazarbayev have been responsible for narrowing the political space within which the opposition can operate, it is rather the structural and material benefits of his rule that have sustained his legitimacy. It has created a form of psychological reverence on which Nazarbayev's power and popularity is based on.

Kazakhstan's stable economic growth since 2001 has been central to Nazarbayev's legitimacy. According to the president, Kazakhstan's economy

grew by 8.5 per cent in 2007 and has been averaging 10 per cent growth since 2001 (Nazarbayev 2008). This economic success was built to a large degree on rising oil revenues derived from Kazakhstan's extensive oil deposits. Recent economic growth has been in stark contrast to the fiscal meltdown that immediately followed independence. But economic stability underpinned by successive growth is attributed to Nazarbayev, even though he is not the sole or even primary architect. Nazarbayev is also viewed as being responsible for attracting foreign investment, which has helped boost the Kazakhstani economy. Large oil revenues and foreign investment have assisted in facilitating the emergence of a middle class with disposable income (Daly 2008). Initiatives like the state-sponsored Kazakhstan Mortgage Company are helping people buy their own homes and the president's Bolashak (the future) education programme is sending 3,000 Kazakhstani students abroad each year to study for a degree, masters or doctorate. Furthermore, with the growing use of the internet and mobile phones, as well as a burgeoning cosmopolitan lifestyle in cities such as Astana and Almaty, Nazarbayev has been able to produce material benefits that underpin his popularity and legitimacy. Crucially, the president is seen to have maintained the unity of the Republic of Kazakhstan despite Kazakhs being a minority at the time of independence. He has promoted Kazakh nationalism, identity and language but not at the expense of ethnic discord. A large number of Russians migrated after the collapse of the Soviet Union, taking with them considerable technical expertise. However, Nazarbayev was seen to have filled the vacuum by creating a new Kazakh technocratic class. Most importantly, the president has been instrumental in maintaining inter-ethnic harmony and stability in a region where inter-ethnic conflict was widely predicted in the early years of independence (Rumer 1993; Akiner 1997). Nazarbayev has carefully groomed Kazakhstan's international reputation, which has led directly to the country receiving 2010 chairmanship of the OSCE. Compared to other regional presidents like the late, eccentric and totalitarian Sapmurat Niyazov in Turkmenistan, or the international outcast Islam Karimov in Uzbekistan, Nazarbayev has provided international respectability for his country.[26] His successful management of structural factors is central to his preservation and consolidation of power.

Nazarbayev's balancing of international relations is also viewed as one of his strengths. Kazakhstan does not face serious pressure from the West to reform its political system. While pronouncements from the OSCE do criticize the conduct of power in Kazakhstan, the economic interests of Western companies and governments in the energy reserves in the country are of a larger concern. As a result, Nazarbayev has undertaken processes, procedures and pronouncements that speak the language of democracy and reform in an effort to appeal to and appease the West, yet there is little follow-through or robustness to the pledges of change. This is due to the president's awareness that the West is unlikely to challenge or ostracize Nazarbayev's grip on power for fear of losing access to energy routes, resources and business opportunities. The president is seen as a man the West can do business with.[27] There is little opportunity for the opposition to receive significant support from the West, weakening their capacity to organzse and strengthen any form of serious challenge to Nazarbayev. Russia too has given support to the

president. As well as sharing a prolonged border, Kazakhstan and Russia also possess close economic and political ties. The Russian leadership would most likely be distrustful of a Western-backed government coming to power in Kazakhstan and this, therefore, provides Nazarbayev with a crucial source of regional support. The president's successful use of a multi-vector foreign policy that balances the competing interests and relationships with the West, Russia and to an increasing extent China, has ensured that the president has strong international support.

Due to these perceived successes, Nazarbayev has created a grand narrative in which he is seen as being fundamental to the stability and future success of Kazakhstan. His mantra of economic stability before political democratization has resonated with the population. Its impact has been particularly acute when Kazakhstan's development is compared to its neighbour Kyrgyzstan. By pointing to the conflict and instability engulfing Kyrgyzstan in the wake of the Tulip Revolution, Nazarbayev has been able to contrast his stable evolutionary model with that of a more urgent form of democratization pursued by external forces. Nazarbayev has alluded to this in major set-piece speeches, in which he has stated, 'we go our own way in Kazakhstan, we choose one path and we follow it. By studying and analysing global practice we choose an evolutionary path. We are opposed to the forced introduction of democracy from the outside' (Nazarbayev 2007). The reference to outside forces is directly related to the supposed influence of either foreign money or foreign NGOs in the revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine. Material benefits and the narrative of stability, inter-ethnic accord and step-by-step democracy are inextricably linked. As one leading member of Nur Otan has stressed, 'stability and peace between different ethnic groups can be achieved by economic reforms that bring economic benefits. Then when this is achieved it will lead to democracy.'[28]

Psychological Reverence

This narrative of stability and gradual democratization has created a psychological reverence towards the president. As Sharp identified, psychological identification with the leader can help sustain obedience and legitimize the relationship between the ruler and the subject (Sharp 1973: 23). This reverence can be witnessed across society, observable most obviously among the government, deputies of parliament and Nur Otan, who portray Nazabayev as a figure of Atatürkian proportions. This was most noticeable when parliament extended the number of terms the first president of Kazakhstan could serve. Head of the conciliatory commission, Ermek Zhumabaev, exalted that Nazarbayev had played, 'a historical role as the first president in our state as one of the founders of new independent Kazakhstan. The extension to Nazarbayev's term was a necessity so as to see through to the end the important political and economic reforms he has begun' (Reuters 2007). In 2009 this idolization of Nazarbayev was taken to extreme with the suggestion by Darkhan Kaletayev, deputy leader of Nur Otan, to make Nazarbayev president for life (Lillis 2009).

To a large degree the public too share this psychological reverence for their

leader. While Nazarbayev's popularity may not be the 91 per cent obtained in the 2005 presidential election, he remains well-liked among a majority of people in the country and would most likely comfortably win an election held under free and fair conditions.[29] The opposition also revere the president to a certain extent as they seem unwilling to openly criticize him, preferring instead to focus their criticizm on the government and Nur Otan. However, it should be noted a constitutional law is in place that prohibits any citizen from offending the honour and dignity of the president, which of course restricts the extent to which the opposition can publicly critic the president. The opposition is prepared to admit Nazarbayev has achieved positive outcomes in Kazakhstan. According to Zharmakhan Tuyakbai, 'despite all the difficulties of transiting to a market economy the country has made some positive steps.'[30] Also, the only 'opposition' deputy in the 2004–7 parliament possessed a portrait of the president hanging in his office, suggesting a reverence for his leadership. [31] Most importantly, despite evidence of fraudulent elections, the opposition is unwilling to step outside the boundaries of the law. They are not prepared to emulate the protests in Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan; instead they prefer to take a legal route, contesting the election results through the courts even though the likelihood of the result being reversed is slight due to the pro-regime sympathies of the legal system. The opposition is prepared 'to operate only in accordance with the law'.[32] Unwilling to take illegal action the opposition, minimizes any chance of a colour revolution in Kazakhstan. A successful revolution requires an opposition party or movement willing to lead and go beyond the boundaries of what is legal in a restrictive authoritarian state.

It is this psychological reverence that has enabled Nazarbayev to endure as a political leader. The stability and material benefit his leadership is perceived to have delivered implies people possess little interest in street protest. Both weak interest formation and a passive electorate have created an atmosphere in which there is no great urgency for change and no great sense of interest in politics. Comparable to many Western states, people in Kazakhstan are generally disengaged from politics and political institutions.[33] According to prominent political analyst Yevgeni Zhovtis, 'people are apathetic they do not trust politicians or political parties, as there is no possibility to change anything'.[34] The opposition are not trusted and are viewed with suspicion, as most were once members of the ruling clique. The battle between the opposition and the regime has been characterised as 'demagogues versus demagogues' (Pshenichnaya 2007). This neatly summarizes the challenge the opposition faces in earning legitimacy with the population. At the same time, however, many in the opposition feel the population is not ready for change and revolution.[35]

How stable is Nazarbayev's legitimacy? If the assumption is made that his authority is based not just on the sanctions imposed curtailing opposition activity but on the positive material benefits he is perceived to have brought the country then what will happen if these material benefits begin to recede? Nazarbayev's popularity and legitimacy can only be sustained as long as those material benefits are maintained. While the president has constantly made reference to the importance of developing a middle class in Kazakhstan, it could be that social class

that precipitates a challenge to the regime. Cracks are beginning to appear in the facade of Kazakhstan's stability. As the global economic crises hit Kazakhstan in the autumn of 2007, prices of basic foodstuffs and energy rose dramatically, a bank crisis emerged in 2008, there was a paralysis of state infrastructure during an exceptionally cold winter that left many citizens without heating, and industrial strikes have become more common. Nazarbayev was also unusually criticized in the mainstream press for ignoring these problems in his annual address.[36] Aside from exogenous fiscal pressures there have been 'losers' in Kazakhstan economic success. Poverty and hardship remain predominant features of life for many Kazakhstani citizens living outside of the major urban centres, while prestige construction projects have seen the forced displacement of whole communities.[37] At the same time, in recent years there has been an emergence of youth groups pursing an active programme of satirizing the regime through staged stunts and flash mobs.[38] These developments imply that an active civic dimension does exist in Kazakhstan, despite its limited nature. It suggests that if material benefits disintegrated considerably citizens would be willing to actively display their discontent of the regime.

Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated how a colour revolution in Kazakhstan is unlikely due to the careful managing of the political space by the presidential administration and due to the level of psychological reverence that exists towards Nazarbayev. The political space has been managed through the use of explicit sanctions taking the form of laws that have narrowed opportunities for opposition parties and elites to participate in the political process and engage with society. Moreover, they have limited the emergence of a genuinely active civil society. Some of these sanctions and actions against opposition parties were in response to the threat Nazarbayev felt the uprisings in other post-Soviet states represented to his hold on power. Despite many laws and sanctions being present prior to the colour revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, the fear of anything comparable happening in Kazakhstan led the presidential administration to further close down autonomy within civil society. At the same time the regime used the colour revolutions as a pretext to crack down on opposition parties and elites. Alongside the closure of political space, society reveres the president due to the perceived material benefits he has brought the country in terms of economic growth, security and sovereignty. This context means fragmented elites and opposition parties are unwilling and unable to effectively challenge the president. International pressure on the regime for reform is weakly enforced, civil society remains fragile and poorly constituted and the population does not seem hungry for political change, and seems content for the current president to remain in charge.

Recent problems demonstrate that despite having consolidated and secured his power through laws and sanctions, the president remains at the mercy of certain structural factors. It resonates with Henry Hale's argument that the disproportionate response by post-Soviet leaders in cracking down in fear of a colour revolution

contagion will make their rule less stable. In Kazakhstan while this is true to a certain extent what maybe matters more are structural factors. Regime stability can only be maintained through repressive sanctions as long as perceived material benefits continue. As a result the laws and sanctions discussed here remain valid because people view the alternatives to Nazarbayev's rule as less appealing. When observing the chaos and instability associated with the Kyrgyz popular uprising Kazakhs would prefer to take a more evolutionary and stable path of development. And it is this vision of stability that Nazarbayev has sold to the country and for the most part it is accepted as legitimate. While making predictions is a dangerous activity in political studies, it is possible to draw some tentative conclusions about the possibilities for Kazakhstan's political future. Only a significant decline in perceived material benefits might wake the passivity of the Kazakhstani electorate and break the reverence for Nazarbayev. This factor alone might not drive a popular uprising, as other factors are important too, including the weakness and disorganized nature of the opposition. However, the lack of a coordinated opposition-led civic action was not a barrier in Kyrgyzstan. A colour revolution in Kazakhstan seems unlikely and the more probable scenario would be a managed transition to a chosen successor, as seen in Russia and Azerbaijan. The case of Kazakhstan, however, does provide one final insight into the phenomena of colour revolutions. That is, while normally characterized as a form of elite turnover, the lack of support and engagement between the opposition elites and the population demonstrates how this form of post-communist uprisings require substantial civic activity and public support to provide legitimacy for an oppositional elite.

Notes

1 Psychological reverence is defined as a population identifying with a leader to such an extent that they view the triumphs and successes of the leader as personal triumphs for themselves. It goes beyond just deep veneration and respect. To an extent people identify the leader as an extension of themselves.
2 This included the 2001 Law about Non-Commercial Organisations and law establishing tax breaks for NGOs.
3 There was a popular theory at the time that president Nazarbayev was only testing the waters with the restrictive proposals and testing the reaction of the international community. The negative response from international governments and organisations led Nazarbayev to prompt the Constitutional Court into rejecting the proposals. Simultaneously, this gave the impression of an independent judiciary bravely overturning presidential decisions, which in the past has been far from the case (Freedom House, 2005).
4 It has been alleged the Soros Foundation was involved in assisting some groups involved in the Orange Revolution.
5 Many well-regarded organisations took part in the state commission including: The Almaty Helsinki Committee, Transparency Kazakhstan and the Bureau of Human Rights in Kazakhstan.
6 Azat is led by former members of the government Bolat Abilov and Tulgen Zhukeev and was formerly known as Nagyz Ak Zhol.
7 The grounds on which they can refuse registration are if: the name of the media outlet is similar to another already registered, incorrect or incomplete registration details,

outlet has been previously closed by a court order for less than one year, unpaid fees, documentation regarding ownership has not been submitted, or if a publication of the same name has been previously banned.

8 For example there is the recent case of Internet journalist Kaziz Toguzbayev who faced charges for insulting the honour and dignity of the president in two articles he wrote concerning the murder of opposition leader Altynbek Sarsenbayev. Toguzbayev received a two-year suspended sentence.

9 While not pursuing a completely different line to her father, Dariga was using her media outlets to portray herself as a form of democratic opposition to the president. By taking them back under state management the president was demonstrating that he would no longer permit powerful independent political players.

10 Author's interview with local political analyst, 21 November 2006, Almaty.

11 Author's interview with Vladimir Kozlov, leader of Alga, 8 January 2007, Almaty.

12 Among the major figures involved in Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan were: Mukhtar Ablyazov (Ex-Finance Minister, chairman of 'Temir-Bank', and President of Kazakhstan Airlines), Gal'mzhan Zhakiyanov (Akim [governor] of Pavlodar Oblast [region]), Tolen Toktasynov (Deputy of the Mazhilis [Parliament], Oraz Zhandosov (Vice-Prime Minister), Alikhan Baimenov (Minister of Labour and Social Protection), Bolat Abilov (Deputy of the Mazhilis and member of the Political Council of Otan Party) and Nurzhan Subkhanberdin (Chairman of 'Kazkommertsbank').

13 Author's interview with Kuanysh Zhalakov, Chairman of the Astana City Branch of the Adilet (Justice) Party, 6 March 2007, Astana.

14 Prior to December 2008 the law required that parties register 50,000 members with 700 in each Oblast. The law was changed in response to the promises made by the Kazakh government in relation to the country being awarded the 2010 chairmanship for the OSCE.

15 This included the Kazhegeldin's Republican Peoples Party, the People's Congress Party and the Democratic Party Azamat (Citizen).

16 This information came directly from interviews the author held with the party leadership.

17 Atameken is another opposition party. Its leader Yerzhan Dosmukhamyedov currently lives abroad and has stated that he will not return to Kazakhstan until his party and Alga are both registered.

18 In 2006 Otan changed its name to Nur Otan after having merged with three other pro-presidential parties, Asar (Together), the Civil Party and the Agrarian Party.

19 The PECs are the bodies which over see the election at individual polling station level.

20 The commissions are elected by the Maslikhats (regional chambers) of which throughout the country are dominated by Nur Otan members.

21 For example see the independent analysis of 'Centre for Social Technologies' during the 2007 election campaign http://zonakz.net/articles/18726

22 The two main leaders of DCK, Gal'mzhan Zhakiyanov and Mukhtar Ablyazov, were put on trial and sent to prison on charges of corruption. They were eventually released in 2006 and both are no longer participating actively in politics.

23 Author's interview with Tulgen Zhukeev, 21 February 2007, Almaty.

24 Author's interview with Adil Nurmakov, Head of External Relations of For A Just Kazakhstan, 13th January 2008, written response.

25 Author's interview with Marina Sabitova, Advisor to Zharmakhan Tuyakbai, 14 November 2006, Almaty.

26 Niyazov, for example, established a personality cult widely viewed as imposing his personal eccentricities upon the country. This included months and days of the week being named after himself and his family and being referred to as Turkmenbashi (Leader of all Turkmen).

27 Despite Kazakhstan recently re-writing the terms of agreement over oil contracts (a move which was very popular in Kazakhstan) this probably remains the case,

especially in light of Kazakhstan still being awarded the Chairmanship of the OSCE for 2010.

28 Author's interview with Sharipbek Amirbekov, Deputy head of the Central Apparatus of Nur Otan, 10th February 2007, Almaty.

29 This observation is based on many informal conversations the author conducted with ordinary people including many students.

30 Author's interview with Zharmakhan Tuyakbai, Chairman of the All-National Social Democratic Party, 30 January 2007, Almaty.

31 This is based on the author's own observation when visiting Alikhan Baimenov's office in the parliament buildings in March 2007.

32 Author's interview with Amirbek Togussov, Chair of Almaty City Branch of ANSDP, 24 April 2007, Almaty.

33 Regular polls conducted by the reputable Association of Sociologists and Political Scientists confirm this (ASIP 2005).

34 Author's interview with Yevgeni Zhovtis, Political Analyst, 31 January 2007, Almaty.

35 This was gleaned from private conversations with members of the opposition.

36 Delovaya Nedelya, 11 February 2008.

37 The most obvious example of this is the case of the Almaty micro district Shanyrak where the Akimat's attempts to remove residents from this area for prestige re-development projects has met considerable resistance (Grishin 2006).

38 A recent example of this is the youth movement Nur Otar, an organisation that satirises the rule of Nazarbayev by calling for the installation of a monarchy in Kazakhstan. One of their most recent activities was to organise a press conference where they announced that corruption should be protected in Kazakhstan. In essence they were mocking a recent government and Nur Otan led campaign that is attempting to root out corruption – of course the irony of this is that many in the government are viewed as being allegedly open to corrupt practices (Yuritsyn 2008).

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13 Turkmenistan

Donnacha Ó Beacháin

Introduction

Turkmenistan was always the least likely candidate for a colour revolution. Ruled by a president for life, it enjoyed none of the conditions that had facilitated regime change in Georgia and Ukraine; there was no free media or civil society, and all opposition was banned. Presidential elections had been abolished for the duration of Saparmurat Niyazov's lifetime and parliamentary elections involved just one party, that of the president, the ill-named Democratic Party of Turkmenistan. In this chapter we examine the character of the Turkmenistan regime and how from the ashes of the Soviet empire a new totalitarian state was established that sidelined all rival contenders for power and insulated itself from the tide of colour revolution activity that swept through many parts of the former USSR.

The Regime

Saparmurat Niyazov's basic contention that the people of Turkmenistan were not ready for democracy and that multi-party systems were alien to Turkmen tradition, which favoured centralized authority, justified for him the creation of an elaborate personality cult. Niyazov's chief eccentricities are well known to students of Turkmenistan and some have filtered out to a broader audience. He renamed the days of the week and months of the year so that they honoured him personally, his family and his book. Gold statues of 'Turkmenbashi' ('father of the Turkmen' as Niyazov insisted he be called) sprung up throughout the country, the most famous being the 'Arch of Neutrality' in central Ashgabat, on top of which a caped and golden Niyazov, arms stretched out in a gesture of welcome, rotated with the movement of the sun. Statues to Niyazov's family, particularly his mother, also proliferated. Indeed, recent Turkmen history was refashioned around the Niyazov family. The entire educational system was refocused on Niyazov's book 'Ruknama' (Book of the Soul) and it was maintained that every question – from mathematics to history – could be answered by reference to the president's great work. Insulated from the outside world by a one-dimensional media, educational system and polity Turkmenistan created a new iron curtain more impenetrable than its Soviet counterpart.

Elections in Turkmenistan had never been wild affairs and provided none of

the opportunities for mass mobilization afforded in countries that have undergone a colour or electoral revolution. In November 1991, after six years as Turkmen communist party boss, the Supreme Soviet unanimously elected Niyazov President of (Soviet) Turkmenistan and on 21 June 1992, he 'won' his first and last presidential election for the position of president of independent Turkmenistan. As with the Supreme Soviet vote, Niyazov was unimpeded by a rival candidate and official figures claimed a 99.8 per cent turnout with 99.5 per cent voting for Niyazov (Khramov 2002: 94). Though he was to rule for another decade and a half, Niyazov never had to 'contest' another election. A January 1994 referendum (with a 99.99 per cent turnout and 99.99 per cent voting in favour – apparently only 212 people disapproved against) extended Niyazov's term in office until 2002 so that he might implement his 'Ten Years of Prosperity' plan unencumbered by elections. In 1999, the need for elections was dispensed with altogether, when Niyazov 'reluctantly' gave in to 'overwhelming popular pressure' by becoming President for Life. This was at the behest of the *Halk Maslahty* (Peoples' Council) whose 2,500 plus members Niyazov personally appointed.

Parliamentary elections followed much the same pattern. On 12 December 1994, 51 candidates vied for 50 seats, and the Central Election Committee (CEC) reported a 99.8 per cent turnout. In 1999 turnout dipped to 99.6 per cent, with as many of 10,000 registered voters failing to cast their ballot. Ten representatives of the state-run Turkmen Institute for Democracy and Human Rights under the President of Turkmenistan (TIDHR) were entrusted with the task of observing (i.e. one monitor for every 156 polling stations) and predictably gave the elections a clean bill of health. The 2004 parliamentary elections were also bereft of independent foreign observers, though the TIDHR battalion was bumped up to two hundred monitors. The head of the TIDHR, Shemshat Atajanova, also served as vice-chair of the sixteen member CEC (Ó Beacháin 2007). Only the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan (DPT) and sometimes a handful of 'independents' have been permitted to contest parliamentary elections.

In his later years, Niyazov spoke occasionally (and vaguely) of retiring from public life. In February 2001, Niyazov told the *Halk Maslahty* that he intended to step down in 2010 to coincide with his seventieth birthday. 'After you turn 70, it is too hard to work but it is possible to work until then', Niyazov declared, 'we need a young president, and an open election with several candidates running … Today, all those willing to become president may start preparing' (UNOCHA 2001). Leaving aside the customary lack of evidence to support his contention that seventy was the line that divided productive and spent presidents (the figure frequently changed to adapt to Niyazov's aging), the statement was interesting both in its promotion of a contested election and encouraging the ambitious to make themselves known. Probably like Mao's 'Let One Hundred Flowers Bloom' invitation those rash enough to take the speech seriously and reveal their ambitions might simply be exposed for elimination from the political scene. After all, nine years is a long time to prepare.

The economic system combined the paternalist rhetoric of the Soviet era without

the security in employment or social services. Niyazov rejected 'shock therapy' for what he called 'silk therapy' but in reality few remedial actions were taken. As in Soviet times, Turkemenistan's economy focussed on the extraction of raw materials for export; the only difference being that now Ashgabat could get world market prices for Turkmenistan's resources rather than the paltry sums offered by the party bosses under communism. Niyazov reverted to the Stalinist practice of fostering a culture whereby his subordinates felt obliged to manufacture statistics that bore no relationship to reality. Since population growth was seen as symptomatic of a healthy and wealthy society, and official ideology dictated that Turkmenistan was both, then, irrespective of inconvenient realities, population must be seen to grow dramatically. The ever-widening gap between boasts of economic miracles and ever-decreasing economic standards prompted Turkmen officialdom to quietly drop Niyazov's 'Ten Years of Prosperity' in favour of 'Ten Years of Stability', which would then be followed by unimaginable prosperity.

Thus, in terms of regime type, Turkmenistan possessed few of the qualities that had facilitated colour revolutions elsewhere. The administration maintained a monopoly on coercive power and was willing to ruthlessly employ force to stay in power. Despite widespread poverty, the state and its leadership were fabulously wealthy and able to provide for the security apparatus necessary to fend off the type of attack most likely (conspiratorial rather than mass uprising). Energy wealth allowed the government to provide a minimum of essential services for free or virtually free (gas, electricity, petrol, salt) while insulating the regime from the need to seek foreign assistance that would no doubt have only come with strings attached. Most importantly, perhaps, the central foci of colour revolutions – competitive multi-party elections – were completely absent in Turkmenistan. Presidential elections had been abolished during Niyazov's lifetime and parliamentary elections, with only one, pro-presidential, party participating, were a sham.

Opposition

One of the essential ingredients of a colour revolution – a strong opposition to the regime – was, and remains, patently absent in Turkmenistan. Once asked (in Washington DC, 1998) why he didn't allow opposition parties to organize freely, Niyazov drolly replied that there were no opposition parties in Turkmenistan 'so how can we grant them freedom' (Sabol 2003: 51). One of his party chiefs further explained that opposition arises when leaders make mistakes but as Niyazov did not make mistakes, suggesting a degree of infallibility, no opposition is needed (Akbarzadeh 1999: 275). In February 2003, the *Halk Maslahty* defined treason as including 'efforts to sow within people doubt about the domestic and foreign policy conducted by the first President for Life of Turkmenistan the Great Saparmurat Turkmenbashi', a definition so vague that it could (and would) be construed to mean any type of opposition to Niyazov (IWPR 2003).

Beneath Turkmenistan's calm political surface lay two potential sources of opposition to Niyazov's rule; from regional tribes, and former Niyazov associates. In the early years of his rule, Niyazov was careful to balance tribal interests

so as not to provide them with a basis for opposition. Clan representation at the upper echelons of government was evenly spread and Niyazov took care to ensure that the regional governors (*hokim*) were drawn from the local tribes. In this, Niyazov followed the Soviet policy of maintaining a tribal balance and eschewed the practice of his neighbouring dictator in Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov, who has often appointed clan outsiders as regional administrators (Collins 2006: 302). Increasingly, however, Niyazov abandoned this policy and began more openly to favour his own Tekke clan for key posts. His official rhetoric exhorted his compatriots to put aside tribal allegiances in favour of the common name of Turkmen but in practice Niyazov demonstrated that he was keenly aware of the tribal factor in Turkmen political life.

Ministers and top state employees were regularly sacked as Niyazov played a game of musical chairs with cabinet members and close associates that often ended in prison. Ministers were set unrealistically high targets to meet but since economic statistics were the stuff of fairytales it depended on Niyazov's whims whether they would meet their quotas or not. These ritual dismissals – which deprived the regime of institutional knowledge, let alone memory – served Niyazov in two respects. First, they allowed him to blame crop failures or economic setbacks on individual ministers who were summarily fired live on national television, the better to reinforce the image of a tough and blameless president. Second, they instilled an air of constant insecurity in the regime; few stayed in a position long enough to build a power base from which Niyazov could be challenged. Most of the disgraced ministers meekly accepted their fate, in part it is suspected because of threats to their families.

Those opposition figures who openly challenged Niyazov lived in exile. Though relatively few in number, the dissidents were deeply divided (the differences often appeared more personal than ideological) and created a myriad of competing organizations. A first wave of opposition gravitated towards former Soviet diplomat and Turkmenistan's first foreign minister, Abdy Kuliyev, who resigned in 1992 complaining of an emergent personality cult, and left for Moscow before receiving asylum in Norway. Despite extortion charges brought against him in 1994, Kuliyev retained the relative high moral ground and successfully resisted extradition requests. Khudaiberdi Orazov, former head of Turkmenistan's Central Bank, established *Watan* (Fatherland) while Demir Allaverdyev founded the Democratic Movement of Power Structures of Turkmenistan. Yet another focus of opposition activity centred on the parliament in exile, headed by Nazar Soyunov, a former Oil and Gas Minister. Boris Shikmuradov's defection in 2002 gave a much-needed boost to the opposition. Intelligent, relatively charismatic, well-connected and financed, the ex-foreign minister had the attributes and resources to mount a serious challenge. He was distrusted, however, by many of the first wave of exiles, not least because he had been Niyazov's right-hand man for a decade and had only discovered his oppositionist soul when a rapid series of demotions prompted suspicions of an impending fall from grace. Free elections were now a central part of Shikmuradov's plan of action, and he claimed that these would be facilitated by 'our foreign partners'. Shikmuradov spoke of increasing discontent in

Turkmenistan; key elements of the elite were defecting and ordinary people were turning their backs on the regime.

> A hot season is coming to Turkmenistan, and we [the opposition] hope to help make it happen. We plan to return all together. Let Niyazov try to stop us. Let Niyazov try to impose the punishments that he has planned for us, with his accusations of various criminal deeds that have no basis in fact. We have direct channels of communication to the people, who await our return. We will return with a one-way ticket.
>
> (Burke 2002)

As explained below, Shikmuradov did indeed return with a one-way ticket to Turkmenistan but not to the destination he had hoped.

External Forces

Colour revolutions have been facilitated in part by external stimuli. The population and internal elites interact with foreign funded NGOs (both local and international) and expect the international community will pressurize their government to abide by electoral and political norms. In the cases of Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, all three states had insufficient natural resources and were heavily dependent on foreign aid and investment. Moreover, their presidents wished to be accepted as democratic leaders and were susceptible to foreign prodding. Turkmenistan presented a radically different case. Abundant natural resources (the world's fifth largest gas reserves) provided the ruling regime with a reliable source of riches, allowing them to ignore the international community. Moreover, because of Turkmenistan's fantastic natural wealth, many countries and institutions treated the Niyazov regime with a respect and consideration unlikely to have been afforded were it bereft of oil and gas. Foreign media reporting on Turkmenistan was usually confined to reporting Niyazov's zaniest exploits and initiatives, often with the result that the regime was considered eccentric rather than cruel. It helped too that the standard bearers of the colour revolutions – Georgia and Ukraine – either relied on Turkmen energy or saw it as an alternative source to Russian supplies, which came with a high political price.

Unlike many other post-Soviet states, which found themselves willingly or unwillingly involved in a new geopolitical rivalry between Russia and the US, the Turkmenistan regime did not seek to join one camp or the other, nor were there political divisions among Westernizers and Russophiles or liberal free marketers and authoritarian conservatives. Instead, Niyazov insulated Turkmenistan from any and all external forces. Turkmenistan's 'permanent neutrality', which to Niyazov's delight was acknowledged by a special UN resolution, also contributed to isolationism for his vision of neutrality meant not getting involved rather than not taking sides. Niyazov reluctantly committed Turkmenistan to participating in the Russian-dominated Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) but stressed that the organization should remain a consultative body with no executive powers

and that Turkmenistan would not participate in any of the commonwealth's military aspects (PRIME-TASS 2005; ITAR-TASS 2005).

Energy riches eliminated the need for foreign investment, beyond those few relating this to extracting raw materials, and this in turn had two effects. First, without strong levels of FDI, the Niyazov regime had nothing to fear from international investors and companies who might seek to influence his policies. Second, the absence of a large affluent middle class meant that society was polarised into just two groups, the impoverished, easily intimated, masses, and those who ruled them. This section will now sequentially look at the manner in which Turkmenistan interacted with Russia, the US, the EU, other international bodies, and the colour revolution states of Georgia and Ukraine.

Russia

Moscow's aims in Turkmenistan were simple: to monopolize the buying, selling and distribution of Turkmen gas at ever-increasing volumes while maintaining Ashgabat's dependence on Russia by preventing the construction of alternative energy routes. As Turkmenistan did not seek NATO membership and Western links were weak, Russia had little motivation to intervene beyond preserving its gas supplies. Moscow's main rival came not from the West but from the East – in China – where the energy-hungry Beijing government had no qualms about dealing with human rights abusers and had money and motive to build a pipeline to Turkmenistan.

On 10 April 2003, Russia and Turkmenistan signed a 25 year deal whereby Niyazov agreed to channel his country's gas supplies to Russia at the bargain price of US$44 per 1000 cubic metres (Tell 2005). Russia could then sell this gas to European customers at world market prices, which were in the region of US$250 per 1000 cubic metres. Russia's monopoly of Turkmen gas was not only a source of fantastic wealth for the Kremlin but also guaranteed Moscow continued leverage over other post-Soviet republics like Ukraine, which had for years tried to negotiate a separate deal with Ashgabat. As a negotiating partner, Niyazov suited the Kremlin well. Being a dictator, Niyazov needed money to prop up his large security and bureaucratic apparatus and provide some state essential services. To negotiate a tougher deal risked a rupture in Russian-Turkmen economic relations, which, while costly for the Kremlin would be fatal for the Niyazov regime. The Kremlin enjoyed further leverage as the only pipelines transporting Turkmenistan's gas ran through Russia. Niyazov also knew that most of his exiled opponents resided in Moscow and, should he prove too difficult, Putin might be tempted to dislodge 'Turkmanbashi' and hand pick a more pliable successor from many willing applicants living not far from the Kremlin.

In return for the bargain gas deals, Russia essentially guaranteed to respect the Niyazov regime, not interfere in Turkmenistan's internal affairs, and, most controversially, to ignore the repression of the county's ethnic Russian population. The Kremlin, which for years had admonished the Baltic States for their treatment of Russians residing there, did nothing to ease the plight of Turkmenistan's ethnic

Russians, whose schools and media were shut down and whose dual citizenship rights were summarily withdrawn at almost the same time as the Putin-Niyazov gas deal was negotiated.

United States

The US did little to mitigate excesses and may have even reinforced Niyazov's grip on power, albeit to a minor degree. US aid to Turkmenistan was not insubstantial; over a quarter of a billion dollars in assistance was given between 1992 and 2005 under the Freedom Support Act and other forms of USAID funding. One of the few productive spheres of American assistance was in the sphere of student exchange programmes – over 1,500 Turkmen students travelled to the US between 1993 and 2005. In addition, Peace Corps volunteers had been active and played a small role in exposing rural Turkmen to the outside world.[1] In general, however, US involvement with Turkmenistan served to buttress rather than subvert Niyazov's tyranny. In 1998, Niyazov was invited to the US for a four-day visit during which he co-signed a number of agreements, mainly relating to energy, with President Clinton (US State Department 1998; Feinberg 1998). That the White House stopped short of a much coveted joint press conference, and described the visit as a working (as opposed to official) one, was typical of Washington's approach to Turkmenistan – engaged enough to get what it needed but sufficiently distanced to deny culpability for the regime's excesses. This tango with totalitarianism intensified after the September 2001 attacks on the United States. Though Niyazov initially ruled out cooperation due to Turkmenistan's 'neutrality', he quickly changed track on the grounds that 'evil must be punished' (similarly Niyazov had equivocated prior to the US invasion of Iraq before endorsing Saddam Hussein's removal and calling for the democratisation of Iraq) (Nicol 2006: 2–3). Turkmenistan became a vital transit and refuelling route for non-military supplies; between 2001–4, forty per cent of all humanitarian aid to Afghanistan was transported through Turkmenistan. More important perhaps was the signing in December 2002 of the Trans-Afghanistan pipeline agreement by the newly installed Hamid Karzai, Pakistan's General Pervez Musharraff and Niyazov. With the Taliban removed by the US invasion of Afghanistan, Turkmen gas could be piped to US ally Pakistan and US occupied Afghanistan from Turkmenistan while simultaneously poking the Kremlin's eye by eliminating Turkmenistan's dependence on Russia.

The 11 September attacks enhanced Turkmenistan's position in American eyes and President Bush was careful to let Niyazov know his help was appreciated, irrespective of his appalling domestic human rights record. For example, Bush and Niyazov regularly exchanged greetings and congratulations during significant holidays like American and Turkmen Independence Days or New Year. Thanking Niyazov for his 2005 US Independence Day message, Bush expressed hope that 'aspirations common to our peoples will strengthen further'. In a message congratulating Niyazov on the occasion of the 27 October national holiday, Bush wrote 'the United States of America highly appreciates the contribution Turkmenistan is making to the global war on terrorism and to the efforts to strengthen regional

security' adding that his government 'is ready to assist Turkmenistan in exercising its potential in democratic and economic progress' (Turkmenistan.ru 2005, 2006). This friendly correspondence continued right up to Niyazov's death.

Niyazov's modest participation in the 'war on terror' also coincided with closer collaboration with NATO. A member of NATO's Partnership for Peace Programme (PfP) since 1994, Turkmenistan concluded an Individual Partnership Programme in March 2004. This was despite the fact that the PfP framework document states that participating countries 'recall that they are committed to the preservation of democratic societies, their freedom from coercion and intimidation, and the maintenance of international law …'.[2] From a NATO perspective, Turkmenistan's participation in PfP would help professionalise the state military but this begged the obvious question as to what the military would be used for. Certainly, Niyazov's concept of participation in the army programme merely reinforced discriminatory practices. At a cabinet meeting broadcast on Turkmenistan state television, Niyazov told his ministers:

> Let us accept the NATO programme Partnership for Peace … They take Turkmen youths for professional training. We need to select the cleanest and most honest young people. You [security chiefs] will all together choose them and check their lineage for three or four generations, to find out whether there were ever any traitors in their clan or not … If a single one betrays [us], you will answer for it. Nobody plays around with the motherland
>
> ('Altyn Asyr' TV 30 March 2004; ICG 2004 p. 27, n. 148).

In addition to professionalizing the Turkmen military and honing its 'counter-terrorism' skills, the US government spent millions on training the Turkmen authorities in combating drug trafficking despite the widespread belief that these very authorities were intimately involved in the trafficking process (ICG 2003: 28).

The European Union played a much smaller role in Turkmenistan affairs and the Niyazov regime was the only Central Asian state not to sign a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with the EU. Though it gradually reduced the small amounts of aid provided under the TACIS assistance programme, in 2004 the EU promised €35 million over five years. The problem with such aid – thought tiny by intergovernmental standards – was that it came with few strings attached and, in the absence of meaningful reforms, may simply have rewarded bad behaviour (ICG 2003: 34).

Ukraine/Georgia

Georgia's Rose Revolution and Ukraine's Orange Revolution caught Niyazov by surprise but the Turkmenistan regime did its best to minimize the fallout. One approach to the colour revolutions favoured by Ashgabat was to argue that they had no significance for Turkmenistan, as it had already undergone its own top-down colour revolution. The argument went along the lines that – liberal phraseology aside – the colour revolutions were essentially the result of a popular desire to build

a strong state and defeat corruption and social injustice. As one officially inspired author maintained:

> The main discourse, the slogan of 'colour' revolutions, is [national] integrity (the unity of nation and state, fighting separatism and regionalism of 'local chiefs'), social justice (restoration of social justice principles, overcoming of society's monstrous material polarization), and, finally, anti-corruption society (getting rid of the established system of nepotism and clan affiliations). It was Niyazov who initiated and realised these ideas in his country much earlier than these states did, using other methods and starting 'from the top'. Therefore, when from time to time 'coloured' scenarios are applied to those CIS countries with the former communist leadership at the top, they have no relation to Turkmenistan
>
> (Dubrovin 2005a).

The reference to regionalism, coming so soon after Abashidze's overthrow in Adjara and separatist murmurs in eastern Ukraine, adroitly allowed Niyazov to repeat his emphasis on submerging clan loyalties with a new Turkmen national identity. This view further maintained that the colour revolutions were symptomatic of dissatisfaction with models of socio-economic development, but since Niyazov had from the beginning chosen the correct policies there was no groundswell of support for an alternative approach or leader, thus the absurdity of considering a colour revolution in Turkmenistan.

The new Georgian and Ukrainian governments, for their part, had no wish to displease Niyazov, for in their inevitable gas wars with the Kremlin they had to keep Turkmenistan onside. Three months after his historic win, Viktor Yushchenko made a two-day visit to Ashgabat. On the eve of his trip, Turkmen human rights groups sent Yushchenko an open letter seeking help in addressing the 'catastrophic' situation in their country whereby all political freedoms and civil society had been erased (TV 5 Kanal 2005). But Yushchenko was not going to risk his country's energy needs and geopolitical orientation by chiding Niyazov for his undemocratic excesses. Niyazov pre-empted the matter by bluntly telling Yushchenko: 'you don't believe any trash in the press. There are no problems with human rights in Turkmenistan' (Sizontova *et al.* 2005). After the meeting, official Turkmenistan expressed satisfaction that it was – Orange Revolution or no – business as usual:

> It was necessary to review the status of cooperation, to get to know each other better, to assess the degree of readiness to continue the bilateral cooperation in the changed political configuration on the post-Soviet area after the 'orange revolution'. The Ashgabat Summit has shown that both Niyazov and Yushchenko have constructive and realistic intentions in this regard. Therefore, there was no hidden 'conflict of ideologies' so anticipated by some analysts. Both leaders, having a clear understanding of the objective domestic and external geopolitical realities of their counties, didn't want to impose their

> own vision of ways of internal development and understanding of democratic values on each other
>
> (Dubrovin 2005b).

For having a 'clear understanding' of realities, one can read 'Ukraine knows it desperately needs cheap Turkmen gas and no amount of democratic rhetoric is going to pay the bills'.

The OSCE, Radio Liberty and Other Bodies

Niyazov appeared to have a heightened sense of vulnerability during the last two years of his life. Though this was in large part due to the assassination attempt (see below), it was also probably influenced by the tide of colour revolution activity in the post-Soviet space. Following a large-scale rounding up of suspected regime opponents, the OSCE, at the request of ten members, commissioned a report to be drawn up by Belgian professor, Emmanuel Decaux, examining the circumstances surrounding the arrests. Though strictly limited to a short time frame and denied all cooperation by Ashgabat (Decaux was denied a visa), the OSCE report was devastatingly accurate with Decaux concluding that 'the contrast between the law as it is presented and the reality marked by terror and fright is mind-boggling' (Decaux 2003: 3). A counter-offensive was launched against the OSCE's Ashgabat office and, on 24 July 2004, the OSCE's ambassador to Turkmenistan, Paraschiva Badescu, was effectively expelled from the country when Ashgabat refused the routine extension of her accreditation.[3] The move, widely interpreted as revenge for the OSCE's critical reports, mimicked a similar Russian action taken the previous year when the Kremlin refused to extend the OSCE's Chechnya observer group mandate, forcing them to leave the country (Socor 2004). In June 2006, the Turkmenistan government upped the ante by accusing two OSCE staff members, Benjamin Moreau and Dieter Matthi, whose briefs included civil society and human rights issues, of plotting with French embassy cultural attaché, Henri Tomassini, to undermine the constitutional order of Turkmenistan. Moreau and Matthi were interrogated by the Turkmen security services. Stating that all relevant information had been handed over to the OSCE and French embassy, whom he expected to take 'appropriate measures', Niyazov warned that 'we will allow no one to destroy the country or prevent the Turkmen people from building a peaceful future' (UNOCHA 2006).

During the same month (June 2006), the authorities arrested Radio Free Europe's Turkmen Service correspondent, Ogulsapar Muradova, employee of French TV production company Galaxie-Presse and French TV station France 2, Annakurban Amanklychev, and human rights activist, Sapardurdy Khajiyev. Muradova's three children were also taken into custody though no warrants were offered to any of the arrested.[4] Initially proffered against them was the old communist charge of spying for NATO states (Khajiyev 2006; Peimani 2006) and Turkmen television broadcasted a meeting of the country's law-enforcement bodies chaired by Niyazov. The National Security minister solemnly reported of a vast conspiracy involving all

major opposition elements at home and abroad with Amanklychev getting 'training in Ukraine in intelligence gathering and sabotage in Turkmenistan and also in the methods used in Ukraine's Orange Revolution' (Turkmen TV first channel 2006).[5] He continued:

> He was trained at the special courses for seven days during the first visit and for ten days during second one. During these courses, Amanklychev was trained in the methods of intelligence gathering, agitating and causing discontent among people and inspiring protests against the government, as well as selecting gullible individuals most suitable for staging disorders. Begmedova [Sofia-based head of Turkmenistan Helsinki Foundation] personally met him in Ukraine and gave him 650 dollars on each of his visits. On his return, he was hired as an agent and given the nickname Kuba.

Among the many ridiculous aspects of the charges was the fact that the training in Orange revolutionary techniques was alleged to have taken place in – of all cities – Donetsk, bastion of anti-Orange Yanukovich support. In reply to these 'revelations', Niyazov feigned surprise that anyone would engage 'in such dirty business in Turkmenistan, a peaceful country where justice is ruling and where nobody is disgraced'. The trio were charged with possession of ammunition and promptly sentenced to six and seven year prison sentences. During the summer, reports filtered out that Muradova and her co-defendants were being subjected to inhuman and degrading treatment before, finally, on 14 September, news emerged that Muradova had died in prison. When her children eventually gained access to the body they found several abrasions on her neck and a large head wound but the authorities claimed that Muradova had died from natural causes and have not since deviated from that version of events (RFE/RL 14 September 2006a, 2006b). Responding to journalist queries, the US State Department claimed to be 'very concerned' about Muradova's death (US State Department 2006). However, a month later Niyazov received a letter from President Bush warmly congratulating him and the Turkmen people on the 15th anniversary of independence along with best wishes for the Oraza bayram celebrations, which he hoped would be 'a truly memorable occasion' (Turkmenistan.ru 2006). 2006 was also the year when the European Commission and the European Parliament's international trade committee voted in favour of granting Turkmenistan 'most favoured nation' status. The fact that the votes occurred almost simultaneously with tough new measures to isolate the Belarussian president, Alexander Lukashenko, by banning him and thirty of his officials from the EU prompted some to speculate that EU attitudes on human rights were determined by the size of a nation's gas reserves (*Washington Post* 2006).

Civil Society, Media and People

The key weapon of the Turkmenistan regime was depriving people of information. Non-government newspapers could not be found on the streets of Ashgabat,

let alone rural towns and villages.[6] All publications – from sporting journals to women's and children's magazines to farmer's periodicals – were richly adorned with little else bar the president's words of wisdom.[7] In 1998, Ashgabat had terminated Russian television broadcasts provided by ORT and four years later prohibited all foreign newspaper and magazine subscriptions (Watan.ru 2004). On 11 July 2004, the authorities shut down the 'last freely available outlet to outside news', Russia's 24 hours-a-day Mayak radio station, which had been broadcasting to all corners of the (now former) USSR since 1964 (Bransten 2004). In the absence of any radio listenership surveys in Turkmenistan it was impossible to know how many people listened to the station's news and music shows but it was generally considered popular. The closure highlighted that the Turkmen authorities sought not merely to shut out western influences but *all* foreign contact that might interfere with Niyazov's indoctrination policies. Mayak's closure complemented measures taken to make life for ethnic Russians in Turkmenistan as uncomfortable as possible with a view to encouraging their departure. Russians did not have an obvious place in Turkmenistan's 'Golden Age' and were viewed as a contaminating cosmopolitan element in society. Symptomatic of this contempt was the deliberate skewing of census figures, which systematically underestimated Russians by two thirds (Turkmenistan's other major minority, Uzbeks, were treated similarly) while ethnic Turkmen numbers were inflated.[8]

Public protests and demonstrations are unheard of in the Turkmen media and the security services are swift and brutal when dealing with rare signs of dissidence. During the summer of 2004 there were reports of anti-government leaflets being distributed in Ashgabat and of arrests but this seems an isolated case (ICG 2004). Despite a young population, Turkmenistan has no tradition of popular protest or student activism (Fredholm 2003: 14). Internet is provided to a tiny amount of people by a very slow, expensive, and heavily monitored government provider. A UNDP study conducted in 2000 found that Turkmenistan ranked among the lowest in the world in terms of web hosts, internet users and country domains. Ninety-five per cent of registered internet users were based in Ashgabat. At the beginning of 2002, there were only 8,000 registered internet users in the entire country, by far the lowest level of internet penetration in Central Asia. The rate of internet users per capita was 29 times higher in Kyrgyzstan for example (UNOCHA 2004a). The number of internet users was still under 10,000 by the middle of 2004 and most of these continued to be those employed in foreign companies or international organizations (UNOCHA 2004b). As in North Korea and Cuba, Turkmenistan had decided that the easiest way to deny citizens vital information was not to block sites or censor web-pages – a very labour intensive process – but simply to forbid access to the World Wide Web.[9] In 2006, there were still no internet cafes in Ashgabat (not to mention the countryside) and there was only one internet service provider in the entire country; Turkmentelecom. The former Sheraton (now Grand Turkmen) Hotel offered a business centre with one computer where for 104,000 manat (approximately US$20 at official rates, or US$5 on the black market) an hour one could access a very slow and unreliable connection.[10]

The Orange and Tulip revolutions, combined with instability in neighbouring

Uzbekistan reinforced efforts to muzzle all remaining means of non-state supervised communication. In February 2005, Viktor Panov, one of Ashgabat's most well-established foreign correspondents working with the Russian news agency *Novosti* was deported after being arrested on espionage charges. Two months later, shortly after Akaev's overthrow in Kyrgyzstan, the Turkmen refused to extend the business licences of international postal companies like DHL and FedEx. Instead all such business would be monopolized by the state *Turkmenpochta*. Few believed the official reasoning that *Turkmenpochta* would pro8vide a cheaper and more reliable service; indeed, prior to the termination of their licences DHL and Fedex had had deliveries confiscated and examined by Turkmen state officials (EIU 2005). These two actions further curtailed the information flow into and out of Turkmenistan and acted as deterrents to others who might be tempted to breach existing restrictions. If information was difficult to transmit, people movement was circumscribed to an even greater extent. Travel for Turkmen within their country was, and is, heavily restricted and up to half the state is off limits. Outside towns and at 50 km intervals there are checkpoints where documents must be submitted for approval before further travel is allowed. Citizens need exit permits to leave the country and several thousand are blacklisted so that permission can never be obtained.

Non-governmental organizations are an alien concept in Turkmenistan and the government allows only a few to register and those devoted to democratization or human rights are prohibited. Certainly, none of the international NGOs that were influential in countries where colour revolutions occurred – NDI, IRI, Soros Foundation, Freedom House and the like – are allowed to exist in Turkmenistan. Membership of civic organizations is largely confined to state-sponsored movements of women, youth and veterans, as existed in the Soviet era. A November 2003 law 'On Public Associations' provided the basis for NGO regulation but almost every type of organisation, however innocuous, failed to get registration. Examples included a group of Ashgabat craftsmen making handicrafts and souvenirs and a sports club for disabled people in Atamurat. Such NGOs, which were devoid of any political underpinnings, were not formally denied registration but rather were told they had failed to fully follow the submission requirements. These objections usually had no basis in law but were simply used as a pretext to rebuff applicants who were told to try again next year. Not all associations were treated thus; it should be noted that an organization of 'UFO-ologists', whose remit was to collect data on extra-terrestrial interaction with earthlings did manage to secure official registration (TIHR 2006a, 2006b).

Education control was the most insidious of Niyazov's schemes to brainwash the people of Turkmenistan. Soviet-era books were destroyed and a new Latin alphabet combined with a de-emphasis on foreign languages denied students access to educational books except those produced by the Niyazov regime. The president decreed all foreign degrees to be incompatible with the Turkmen educational system in 2004, essentially prohibiting those with international qualifications from working in Turkmenistan's official structures (this despite the fact that Niyazov's *alma mater* was in St. Petersburg). Private schools teaching language and computer skills were shut down and teachers who helped students apply for foreign

programs targeted (IWPR 2004). In short, Niyazov demolished all mechanisms whereby citizens could access information other than that produced by the state.

The Plot to Kill Niyazov

With all avenues of political protest and dissent shut down, the options available for oppositionists to remove Niyazov were reduced to a violent coup. The hallmark tools of colour revolutionaries – mass mobilization, exploitation of independent media, co-ordination of opposition forces, vigilant NGOs and a sympathetic international community – were not afforded to Turkmen dissidents, who either resided abroad or in prison. Thus, a conspiracy to assassinate Niyazov was hatched by key rebels, most of them erstwhile Niyazov acolytes and under the apparent leadership of former foreign minister, Boris Shikhmuradov.[11] The assassination attempt, which involved an armed assault on Niyazov's cavalcade, was a conspicuous failure and, if official reports are to be believed, Niyazov did not even notice it. The Turkmen media blamed both Russia, for harbouring so many enemies of the state, and the US, whose embassy it was claimed had tried to help Shikmuradov flee and which had spread 'false' rumours of mass arrests (ICG 2003: 33). The Karimov regime in neighbouring Uzbekistan was accused of being central to the plot. As a result, the Uzbekistan embassy in Ashgabat was raided along with the residence of the Uzbek ambassador, who was promptly expelled.[12] While Niyazov exploited the opportunity to round up the usual suspects and publicly condemn the familiar array of foreign-backed traitors, Shikmuradov's capture was a prize. Not content with extracting a simple 'I did it' confession from the ex-foreign minister, the regime published a 150 page rambling diatribe in which Shikmuradov admitted to all sorts of wrongdoings against Niyazov 'though I knew perfectly that everything, freedom and democracy, is present here'. Shikmuradov quoted extensively from Ruhnama, which he described as a 'masterpiece … gifted to the people worldwide' (Shikmuradov 2004: 146, 148). Indeed, Shikmuradov was made to contend that had he read Ruhnama as a boy he would probably have not turned out so badly. Shikmuradov's show-trial and imprisonment along with hundreds of others demoralised many oppositionists and fed Niyazov's already over-developed paranoia.

A Very Turkmen Coup: Death of Niyazov and the New Dictatorship

What could not be done with the assassin's bullet was achieved by a cardiac arrest on 21 December 2006.[13] Confusion reigned for a short time and some thought that Niyazov's untimely demise might provide an opportunity for some kind of Turkmen political renaissance. Within days of Niyzov's death, former foreign minister and leader of the exiled United Democratic Opposition of Turkmenistan, Abdy Kuliyev, announced that his followers would be dispatching a convoy of flour to starving Turkmen with the aim of starting a 'flour revolution' in the country. For Kuliyev, bread was chosen as it was the main food eaten by Turkmen but,

due to Niyazov's disastrous economic policies, grain harvests were often well below target and there were regular interruptions in the supply of flour. Kuliyev said the exiled opposition leaders would follow the convoy: 'this will be the start of our 'flour' revolution. The dispatch of a convoy of flour is a manifestation of utterly peaceful intentions on the part of the opposition. We intend to come to Turkmenistan bringing bread' (*RIA Novosti* 2006). Kuliyev's plan was never effected, for he and his fellow oppositionists remained barred from the country.

What transpired in the wake of Niyazov's death was a very Turkmen coup. According to Turkmenistan's constitution Niyazov's death should have seen the speaker of parliament, Ovezgeldy Atayev, take over as acting president. However, almost simultaneously with Niyazov's death, Atayev was promptly arrested, charged with driving his daughter-in-law to suicide out of ethnic hatred, and sentenced to five years (Ezizov 2007). An alliance between Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov deputy prime minister with responsibility for health and education and Presidential Guard chief Akmurat Rejepov resulted in the *Halk Maslahaty* being quickly assembled to rush through constitutional changes necessary for Berdymukhammedov's elevation to the presidency. First, the body changed the basic law so that in the event of a president's death, the role of acting president would fall not to the parliamentary speaker (now imprisoned) but to the deputy chair of the Cabinet of Ministers (Berdymukhammedov's position). Second, as the constitution stipulated that presidential candidates must be 50 years of age, while Berdymukhammedov was 49, the *Halk Maslahaty* lowered the requirement to 40 years of age. Other restrictions that disbarred exiled oppositionists or members of Niyazov's family – like those pertaining to Turkmen language proficiency and residency – were left in place.

With Atayev out of the way, and the necessary constitutional changes enacted, public preparations for Berdymukhammedov's coronation could begin. In addition to becoming interim president and supreme commander of the armed forces Berdymukhammedov was made head of the funeral committee that would oversee Niyazov's interment. He was thus the only face of the Turkmen authorities consistently in the public eye. A rumour circulated, perhaps initiated by Berdymukhammedov himself to legitimise his claim to the throne, that the acting president was in fact Niyazov's son. While theoretically possible – Berdymukhammedov bears a striking resemblance to Niyazov, who would have been 18 years old when his successor was born – no proof was provided. Presidential elections were called for 11 February and five candidates – all loyal members of the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan – were put on the ballot paper as willing pawns to 'contest' against Berdymuhammedov. These rival candidates attended security council meetings to receive their scripts and were shadowed on their 'campaigns' by MNB (Turkmenistan's internal security service) agents. (Finn 2007) The election saw a return to the implausibly high turnouts of pre-2004; 98.65% of the electorate were deemed to have voted with almost 90 per cent plumping for Berdymuhammedov.

Despite these shenanigans, Berdymuhammedov's inauguration was well-attended by representatives of thirty states, including all of Turkmenistan's major

gas customers.[14] The opposition-in-exile could only watch with frustration as world leaders lined up to congratulate the new leader of Turkmenistan. Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher attended for the US while Russian Prime Minister Mikheil Fradkov headed a high powered Russian delegation that included Gazprom head Alexei Miller both of whom were assured that pre-existing energy agreements would remain in place. It was business as usual. Conspicuous heads of state present included the Georgian and Ukrainian colour revolution leaders, Mikheil Saakashvili and Viktor Yushchenko.

Some heralded Berdymukhammedov's reign as signifying a new beginning for Turkmenistan but there was little to sustain the optimism. Among the new ruler's extravagant promises was to provide internet access to every citizen. Some have argued that such pledges are aimed less at domestic audiences than international ones for as one human rights activist put it 'to most people in Turkmenistan, the internet is about as familiar as a flying saucer' (ICG 2007: p. 6, n. 29). In 2007, Ashgabat opened its first Internet café but far from being a major breakthrough it merely underlined the totalitarian character of the state. With six computers all facing portraits of Niyazov and Berdymukhammadov and a copy of Rukhnama in view, prospective users had to hand over their passports before being assigned a computer, which provided a heartbreakingly slow connection at US$4 an hour. Far from there being queues, the six computers were never simultaneously occupied.[15]

After being nominated for president, Berdymukhammadov proclaimed that 'we'll keep alive the legacy of Saparmurat Turkmenbashi the Great' and pledged to preserve 'our ancient democratic traditions' as revived by Niyazov. In advance of the presidential contest, Turkmenistan's chief election official, Murad Kariyev, promised to 'do everything' to ensure Berdymukhammadov's victory 'because he is a worthy successor' to Niyazov (*IHT* 2006). No substantial de-Niyazovification process was undertaken beyond the natural process of a new leader making his own stamp. It is unlikely that the Turkmen will be subjected to a speech akin to Khrushchev's 1956 address when he debunked his predecessor, the better to introduce new policies and bury old hatchets.

Russian analysts maintained that Turkmenistan, despite Niyazov's unexpected death, the resulting uncertainty and multi-candidate election, provided an unlikely venue for a colour revolution. Sergey Markov, director of the Moscow-based Institute for Political Research, reflected the popular Russian contention that colour revolutions were mainly the result of foreign stimuli and noted that Niyazov had adroitly stymied such external forces:

> A colour revolution is a revolution carried out by the forces of NGOs who are organized with powerful external support. It is achieved through the tactic of blockade during elections and refusal to recognize those elections. It is only accomplished after fairly serious and systematic work. It is supposed to culminate in the formation of some kind of political regime controlled from outside. But today that is impossible. The sources for such a revolution – that's to say, NGOs financed by the USA and the EU – are virtually nonexistent in Turkmenistan. Maybe at some time in the future, given favourable

> circumstances, they may be established. But at the moment there is no possibility of this.
>
> (Ekho Moskvy radio 2006)

Though this analysis over-emphasises the role of external factors in encouraging a colour revolution, it does complement findings that suggest that emasculating civil society, which includes foreign-funded NGOs, is an important tactic in combating colour revolutionary activity.

Conclusion

Niyazov had one innovative way of preventing presidential elections becoming a vehicle for a colour revolution – simply not to hold any presidential elections. Parliamentary elections and referenda were merely window dressing; theatres of the absurd conducted largely for the benefit of the international community. Niyazov presided over an education system that was a launderette of the mind; students who entered with impure political assumptions were programmed to leave as devout followers of the President. Turkmenistan's energy riches drugged the sensibilities of US and EU. Even the colour revolutionary states of Georgia and Ukraine were silent on Niyazov's excesses as they pursued their own energy-based relationships with Ashgabat. Only the OSCE, noted for its patient diplomacy and consensus-building measures, locked horns with the Niyazov regime. Niyazov was wary of international contacts that went beyond the buying and selling of his country's national resources. Similarly, most states and international organizations, if they heeded Turkmenistan at all, largely confined their relations to trade. Those with higher standards or pretensions to democracy would occasionally issue a critical statement but these were rare and never obstructed business. Rather than stimulating opposition forces to challenge the regime or fostering an open society, the western powers' largest contribution was to bolster Niyazov's position as his country's jail-keeper. Russia, for its part, never feared Turkmenistan would join the western camp (though it did worry about western assistance in diversifying Turkmenistan's energy supply routes) and was even willing to sacrifice ethnic kin for bargain gas deals. Civil society, as commonly understood, did not play any independent role in Turkmenistan. Media and education were one-dimensional, their only role to indoctrinate rather than educate. No opposition parties existed within Turkmenistan and those in exile were divided, weak, and had increasingly few contacts in their native country. Even in the unlikely event of a substantial mobilisation of ordinary people, there were no institutions, organizations, or leaders that could provide coherence or channel these demands peacefully into an alternative mandate for government. The Niyazov regime possessed a large, well resourced, and loyal presidential guard and a ruthless security service, both of which would have had little trouble or scruples in dealing with a challenge to the state. In sum, Turkmenistan enjoyed none of the characteristics that had facilitated colour revolutions in other post-communist states. Niyazov, ultimately, was brought down not by a strong civil society but by a weak heart.

Notes

1 Information gleaned from annual US State Department reports on Turkmenistan available at www.state.gov
2 The document also commits signatories to 'reaffirm their commitment to fulfil in good faith the obligations of the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights'. See PfP 1994.
3 In September 2004, Badescu's native Romania awarded her the accolade of 'Romanian diplomat of the year working in an international organization'. See her biography at www.osce.org/montenegro/19996.html
4 Muradova's arrest followed months of harassment of the few remaining RFE/RL journalists in Turkmenistan. See RFE/RL, 23 March 2006, 27 March 2006, 5 April 2006.
5 Subsequent quotes from same source unless otherwise stated.
6 Author observations in Turkmenistan, June 2006 and June 2007. In 2005, the Reporters Without Borders Annual Press Freedom Index put Turkmenistan 165th out of 167 countries, just behind Eritrea and North Korea. See summary of report – 'North Korea, Eritrea and Turkmenistan are the world's "black holes" for news' – and the index at www.rsf.org
7 Author's observations in Turkmenistan, June 2006.
8 Russians were reported to number 121,000 in 2002 whereas Uzbeks were said to be 109,000 (real numbers for both estimated to be about 350,000).
9 In Havana, there were only a handful of internet cafés in the summer of 2005 and the cost per hour, at $US6, was approximately half a month's salary. Author's observations in Havana, August 2005.
10 Author's observations in Ashgabat, May 2006.
11 There is a theory that the assassination attempt was an elaborate hoax on Niyazov's part to instigate a major campaign against his opponents and purge his administration of perceived threats and liabilities. The 24 December 2002 open letter published on Shikmuradov's website (www.gundogar.org) claimed that the assassination attempt was 'planned and executed by the Turkmen authorities with the sole purpose of generating a reason to carry out repressions against [the] opposition, their friends and families'. While such a hypothesis can never be completely excluded it is has not gained wide currency and is unlikely; the Niyazov regime never had any compunction about fabricating charges and purging officials, irrespective of their position or previous service.
12 The lack of retaliation from Tashkent, which contented itself with a simple denial of complicity in the assassination attempt, led some to speculate that perhaps Karimov's agents did have a hand in events. See Albion 2002.
13 It cannot be excluded of course that Niyazov was murdered – and conspiracy theories have circulated that he was poisoned by close associates, fearful of his ever-expanding definition of enemy – but no evidence has been provided. Though he availed of the best medical treatment in the west, Niyazov was known to suffer from poor health and often ignored his physicians' advice.
14 These were the presidents of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Afghanistan, and Iran and parliamentary leaders from Armenia, Belarus, and Uzbekistan.
15 Author's observations in Ashgabat, June 2007.

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Conclusion

While writing these lines the Iranian government is handing out death penalties to opposition members who participated in the June 2009 political protests – the biggest of the last 30 years – that followed the announcement of disputed presidential election results. Those condemned in the Iranian 'green revolution' are accused of having endangered national security. The Iranian authorities, who quickly described the protests as foreign-sponsored efforts to implement the colour revolution model in Iran, had familiarized themselves with the tactics that would be used and were, thus, able to counterbalance them. Aware that the international dimension of the protests is of utmost importance, the authorities exercised enhanced control over those foreigners present in Iran at the time. Before the elections a number of foreign scholars who had already received visas were informed their entry documents were no longer valid. A 23-year-old visiting French student was jailed and accused of espionage; she was eventually allowed to return to France but had to apologize publicly and acknowledge her guilt. The Iranian case might suggest that even the most vibrant civil society and activists can do little against a regime that harshly represses demonstration. Iranian protests suffered from the extremely limited role international and diplomatic forces could play. Arrests of random EU and US citizens (like the American hikers detained on 2 August 2009) was merely another way to symbolically suggest that international interference would not be tolerated but rather would be met with disproportionate force.

Based on the post-Soviet cases presented in this book, one would be tempted to suggest that a colour revolution had been attempted in Iran, and this was not the only attempted colour revolution in 2009. In March Moldovans attempted what has been labelled the Twitter Revolution for most of the actions were announced on Twitter, which people were able to update from their mobile phones (Mungiu-Pippidi and Munteanu 2009). If revolutions are often short of revolutionaries (Thompson 2003), they are likely to be even shorter of revolutionaries with Twitter access. However, if we take this action in a broader context, and look at the way global politics has evolved in recent years, at least two things seem evident. One is that colour revolutions, as we define them and with the features we have identified in this book, did not stop in 2006; the other is that, after 2005, it transpired that colour revolution attempts were unable to produce regime change, as they had previously succeeded in doing.

Obviously, not all attempted protests had the right mix of ingredients. In some cases the opposition was not strong enough, in others international pressure was insufficient, or the authorities were still popular. Moreover, the post-Soviet authoritarian regimes started taking note of this new strategy and sought out more effective means of self-preservation. Because elections seemed to provide a good framework for protests and political activism a counter-strategy was developed to maintain strict control of the election process (for free and fair elections could spell the end) and limit the influence of international forces. In 2005, Kyrgyzstan had undergone a political struggle accompanied by street riots that eventually led to political change. However, this would turn out to be the last regime change prompted by these kinds of tactics. In the same period attempts at colour revolution in Moldova floundered for want of basic requirements, not least that elections were judged insufficiently fraudulent to warrant mass mobilization. Regardless of the level of popular preparation in Armenia and Azerbaijan, the authorities there had been forewarned by the Georgian Rose Revolution and were correspondingly forearmed. Lack of international support and a limited opposition did the rest.

Russian, Belarusian and Kazakh elites, among others, did not merely rely on the control they exercised over the opposition and NGOs and the relative immunity from Western economic forces they enjoyed. They were also 'pro-active', (to use an expression quite fashionable among European NGOs) and since the 2003–4 events most ex-Soviet republics tightened the screws on local NGOs and their international contacts. In Russia they went as far as to create pro-government NGOs, on the model of those participating in colour revolutions, to support President Putin and his administration. Moreover, it was demonstrated that these governments would not tolerate criticism even if peacefully expressed. The clearest warning was the Andjan massacre executed by the Uzbek authorities, in May 2005, when several hundred protesters were brutally killed. Another signal was the Belarussian mass arrests of 2006, which encompassed everyone from students to top opposition leaders. These events marked the end of an era. If several thousand protesters marching in a city might previously have provoked authorities to estimate how best to mediate, now masses of protesters were considered a real threat and to be stopped at all costs. Rather than protests being occasionally a way for people to let off steam, they were now, the autocrats surmised, the first step on a journey that led to regime change. Non-violent protests, since 2006, are non-violent unilaterally, for there is even less a guarantee that post-Soviet authorities will tolerate pacific protests.

Yet another wave of protests was organized after 2005–6 in countries where the governments that had gained power thanks to civil disobedience were challenged by oppositions employing the same tactics. Since November 2007, for example, protests became a regular feature of Saakashvili's presidency in Georgia. Politically motivated demonstrations, with people taking to the streets but not challenging election results, can be significant even if they bring no political change. Such events might signify in some countries the end of an era of electoral democracy, when politicians turned to the people only when they required them to cast a ballot. Just as voters elected politicians, the same people may reverse their preferences

and if this might not be visible when people cast their vote it becomes so when people take to the streets to openly challenge a political elite. Once politicians know that their election depends on real preferences then to look for re-election requires pleasing the citizens during their mandate, and accountability before an electorate is an important step in democratization. Increasingly, therefore, we see in some parts of the post-communist space a rejection of the Soviet model of 'one man, one vote, once' (if that) in favour of a vote being a temporary endorsement of a policy platform and not a licence for perpetual power.

This might suggest that colour revolutions continue, albeit on a smaller scale. The same tactics are applied over and over again, in more and more countries, though to a different extent, and although an international dimension is still present they have come to depend increasingly or almost exclusively on the local context and domestic opposition strength. An important difference is that authorities have learned how to deal with non-violent protests. In some cases they are able to hinder the activities of NGOs and other civil society actors by exerting a strong control over fundraising, domestic initiatives and international contacts. They may even set up a counter NGO network to challenge what opposition figures or NGO leaders are doing. The authorities always retain the option of violent force and have an impressive array of methods at their disposal to liquidate protesters and opposition leaders.

Non-violent movements in recent years have shown how easy it is for political elites to lose their prestige and position in a very short spell. Political opportunities have changed for the opposition (they have more to win) and the authorities (they have more to lose). With such stakes, crushing a pacific crowd of students wandering through a city centre does not anymore seem like using a cannon to kill a fly, for colour revolutions have shown the authorities that these crowds might oust them. 'If in doubt, shoot' is now clearly the motto of autocrats who wish to keep power. This also means that if engaging in civil disobedience could previously have been considered relatively safe – for creating a Woodstock-like atmosphere did not appear to be challenging the authorities – there is now much greater stakes involved. Accordingly, there might be less people ready to take to the streets as authoritarian regimes show they are willing to use violence gratuitously if they consider pacific demonstrations a real threat. An examination of how protesters were recently brutalized in Armenia, Myanmar, Iran, Tibet and Mongolia illustrates the point.

Explaining the Colour Revolutions

In this book we have tried to identify and scrutinize the factors that have contributed to the success and failure of colour revolutionary efforts. Cognisant of non-violent protests in communist Central and Eastern Europe and mindful of the 1989 revolutions, post-Soviet authorities have been challenged by a mix of local political forces, civil society, common people and international actors. Media manipulation, fear of authorities, traditional deference to authority, powerful vested interests supporting the regime and little historical precedent for democracy or civic

action were among the props upholding many post-Soviet regimes. Opposition movements utilized elections to garner visible popular support and correspondingly to enhance their legitimacy. Focusing political energies on elections as a verdict on the regime facilitated anti-state organization and collaboration with Western supporters. Between elections opposition repression often escaped comment but elections focused international attention briefly and opened up temporary opportunities to reach a larger audience, domestically and internationally. When voters demonstrated in sufficiently large numbers against official results the opposition sometimes succeeded in discrediting the authorities. For this reason a central role has been given to internationally supervised parallel vote counts and ensuring independent exit polls. When these produce discordant figures they have given a solid basis on which to contest flagrant vote rigging. With each election and demonstration, a reservoir of experience is created and protest strategies are refined with movements digesting lessons from previous campaigns in other countries.

While all countries examined in this book are variations of a post-Soviet authoritarian state, it is clear that a relatively liberal political environment is necessary for civil society to develop and receive foreign assistance, for an independent media to emerge and to enable the opposition to organize and mobilize. The character of the regime has a determinative influence on the species of political life able to survive. Indulgence of opposition can be motivated by presidential whims, the relative weakness of the state, or may stem from a dependence on external aid but the presence of a political opposition willing and able to present itself before the electorate has been a *sine qua non* for a colour revolution. Crucial too is an understanding that neither the state, which enjoys a monopoly of force, nor the opposition, who may have the ability to mobilize tens of thousands, will resort to violence to achieve their ultimate objectives. This often unarticulated but widely appreciated pact certainly facilitated the Orange Revolution, for example, but is completely absent in a country like Uzbekistan where the opposition is illegal and death frequently the price of protest. In the more authoritarian states, where death, exile, or imprisonment might follow a presidential loss of power, the stakes are high and the use of force is considered a more reliable tool to crush opponents and certainly worth the possible costs of temporarily losing favour in the democratic world. In closed societies, where the opposition cannot demonstrate, freely coordinate their own efforts nor develop strong relations with external actors, putative efforts to rally the masses have been quelled with relative ease. In Russia and Belarus, for example, where all foreign funding to local NGOs must pass through state control, it has been much harder to fund civil society than in Ukraine or Kyrgyzstan.

The limitations on inter-societal communication and civic awareness, be they in the form of censorship or restrictive laws on organizing and assembling, have meant that political messages must find non-traditional channels of communication in authoritarian societies. Satire, irony and humour, though deeply rooted in Soviet times, have taken on new forms and found innovative media through enhanced access, particularly among younger people, to the internet and mobile phones. Ideas have also been transmitted through many kinds of art (including eye-catching graffiti), musical performances, comics, stickers, badges, scarves and gadgets.

Faced with the daunting task of confronting centralized regimes that usually enjoy dominant or exclusive control of the economy, media and political power, opposition groups have had to find new ways to effectively mobilize and inject with ardour populations that historically have been noted for their passivity and fatalism. Non-violent protest may incur fewer fatalities but is nonetheless a very hazardous activity in many post-Soviet states. Opposition groups have had to proselytize secretly, organize and activate all elements not indebted to the ruling order, and channel them into a viable alternative. Opposition unity has been important but not essential. In the crucial cases of Georgia and Kyrgyzstan, unity among the political party opposing the incumbent occurred only after the ousting of the president, not before (Ó Beacháin 2009). Autocrats also tended to focus on the activities of organized political parties and took solace from their fragmentation, disorganization and unpopularity. But this arguably missed the even greater threat of an emergent civil society.

The sometimes formidable resources and organization required to carry out a successful colour revolution has prompted questions regarding the influence of external actors. The fact that the election fraud whistle-blowers that give credibility to opposition claims are very visible and foreign observers has further entrenched this perception. It is true that international actors can affect the domestic balance of power in post-Soviet states, and that since the end of the Cold War a myriad of Western-funded NGOs and civic initiatives have been launched in the former USSR. The Soros Foundation, established in 1993 by Hungarian-born US citizen George Soros, has been particularly active by funding civic education programs and establishing a university in Budapest to help mould future post-Soviet elites.

Though Western support has grabbed headlines, less remarkable but equally important has been the mutual support authoritarian states have afforded each other. The Kremlin, in particular, by offering economic, political, military and diplomatic support to besieged autocrats (often in return for access to their natural resources) has provided insulation from the colour revolution virus. Energy subsidies have simultaneously bolstered autocrats and fostered dependency.

Despite the inevitable focus on geopolitical battles, a comprehensive review of colour revolution activity, as has been conducted for this book, emphasizes the centrality of domestic social forces in determining the form and pace of events. In each of the colour revolution scenarios a network of civic NGOs was established, consolidated and indefatigably utilized to coordinate and support societal forces mobilized to contest fraudulent elections and advocate democratic change. While the colour revolutions appear to have sprung up overnight, they were often the product of patient, arduous work carried out over many years and sometimes on the foundations of earlier campaigns. Civic activism took root among some sections of the electorate during the 1990s as the end of the Cold War facilitated enhanced western investment in NGOs and contacts with western organizations. NGOs coordinated their efforts, the better to articulate their demands and devise a coherent strategy that could attract domestic and international support. By focusing on elections, these groups narrowly framed the issue ensuring a high-profile event with maximum publicity, international monitoring, and simplifying donor options,

all of which aided the effective channeling of energies. While influential NGOs had developed in countries like Georgia and Ukraine, other post-Soviet states like Belarus and Kazakhstan kept them on a very tight rein. By limiting and controlling these forces, sometimes aided by a relatively quiescent political culture, they dampened civic activism thus reducing the likelihood of a successful colour revolution.

For some time many ruling regimes focused on elite power games aimed at consolidating control and enriching supporters. In general, they paid scant attention to those organizing at the bottom of society, considering them too feeble to be politically determinative. The colour revolutions have changed all that. Activists are subjected to constant surveillance and harassment by state security forces.

Pacific protests shook public opinion as a diffusion of ideas and strategies helped spread the colour revolution phenomenon. A strong demonstration effect was at play, galvanizing hitherto politically static societies. After the successes of OK '98 in Slovakia and the Bulldozer Revolution in Serbia, training for activists working in democracy-oriented NGOs proliferated. The learning process is multidimensional. Not only have opposition activists learnt from each other and from state repression but autocrats have also observed the colour revolution and learnt from the successes and failures of both anti-regime agitators and their presidential peers. The perception that foreign-funded NGOs are a key component of the colour revolution strategy, for example, has prompted post-Soviet authoritarian states to redouble their efforts at emasculating civil society. Geography also matters and played a role in determining events in Georgia and Ukraine but does not account for the lack of a colour revolution in neighbours Armenia or Belarus.

Quo Vadis?

What happened to the colour revolutions? Are they finished? No further regime change seems possible using the type of civil disobedience tactics executed in Georgia and Ukraine. Does it mean that a new strategy has to be conceptualized for those countries struggling against authoritarian elites? Is there a chance that a slight modification of the instruments will be enough to provide renewed impetus? Once the authorities know the rules of the colour revolution game (mobilise against election results to effect a change in government) why would the opposition continue with the same tactics? Once Western organizations investing in civil society realize that that strategy has been exposed, why continue using them? After all, the authorities have always the ace of state force up their sleeve, which they can employ at leisure and still claim to be serving the national interest.

Inevitably, unfulfilled expectations have encouraged disillusionment as old problems remain. Facile headlines of wilting roses and rotting oranges reinforce the perception that the colour revolutions were a transient phenomenon of no enduring significance. And yet the capacity to inspire people to contest fraudulent elections or unpopular political decisions has not dissipated. The strategies and technologies of the colour revolutions disorientated many post-Soviet dictatorships. Authoritarian regimes have adapted to the phenomenon by adopting a myriad of repressive countermeasures – often mimicking oppositionist techniques – to

strangle nascent protest movements. They have manufactured counter NGOs that endorse and defend the ruling regime, and sponsored clone civic initiatives and youth organizations to sow confusion. Such actions complement a wider strategy of enfeebling NGOs by restricting access to non-government funds and communication with other agencies. While these regimes have regained composure, they remain largely unconsolidated. Attempts to carry out colour revolutions have continued despite the formidable obstacles and risks. There is a constant transfer of knowledge across borders with veteran activists training local leaders in the techniques of mass protest. Colour revolution movements were remarkable for their patient organization, strategic thinking and an ability to attract and retain a network of dedicated activists. They have, thus, provided knowledge and experience that may be used in other forms and contexts.

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